Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Centenary Souvenir Commemorating the Advent of Bhagavan Sri Ramana at Arunachala



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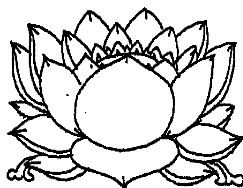
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जाते वेदपराङ्मुखे भुवि जने घोरेऽत्र काले कलौ
संभूतः श्रुतिधर्मधारणपरः श्रीशङ्करः शङ्करः ।
अन्तर्ध्वान्त विनाशनाय च नृणां स्कन्दावतारोऽधुना
सोऽयं श्रीरमणो गुहो नरतनुः कुर्यात्सतां मङ्गलम् ॥

In this frightening Kaliyuga, with people turned away from the path of scriptures, Lord Siva, desirous of the welfare of the people took birth, intent upon upholding Dharma as enunciated in the scriptures; Now this incarnation of Skanda has come for the destruction of the inner darkness of men. May Ramana, the indweller, shower His Grace on all beings.

प्राप्तः सर्वात्मभावं जित जनन मृतिर्योऽक्षरत्वाधिरूढ
उच्चैः पूर्णो वरेण्यः सहजपदरतो धूतसंसारबन्धः ।
सत्यं ज्ञानं ह्यनन्तं हृदि कलयसि यस्तत्त्वमस्यादि लक्ष्यं
तत्त्वां जानेऽवधूतं रमणगुरुवर ! त्वां नतोऽहं नतोऽहं ॥

Having identified with the Self of all beings, having conquered the cycle of birth and death, he is established in his imperishable Self; free from the fetters of Samsara, remaining in his natural (Sahaja) State, he attained the excellence of plenitude; In his heart he is one with the principal statements of scriptures such as THAT THOU ART viz. the Truth of Being, Knowledge and Infinity. I know you as the great ascetic, Oh Ramana the best of Gurus! I bow to Thee. I bow to Thee.



Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Dates are events in the dimension of time. Once the events are over, they recede into the pages of History. But the event that happened a century ago has practically no parallel in History. The boy Venkataraman who was a mere 16 year-old, abiding in constant unwavering consciousness of identity with the Self, stood there before the mountain, in response to the call of his Father. At that moment, when the boy faced the mountain, he passed from time to timelessness. The tenuous links between him and the world of form and name disappeared. At that moment, Sri Ramana, the transcendental being was born. He transcended the axis of time and space but yet chose to continue to wear the physical frame for the next 54 years. It is a story of great sacrifice as Sri Sankara mentions in Praudanubhuthi -

'Praudah Praudah Nijanubhuthi Galitha, Dvaitendrajalo, Guruhu ...
Sacchishya Bodhaya Tath, Satyam Samsritavan. ....'

For the sake of teaching the aspirants, he continue to live in the body, with which he had no identity. It is no exaggeration to say that Lord Dakshinamurti himself had chosen to settle down at the foot of the hill of Arunachala as Sri Ramana Maharshi to guide and transform the seekers.

The Mundakopanishad proclaims 'Gurum Evabhi gaccheth' - (one should streneously seek the great master and reach him for enlightenment). In the case of Sri Ramana, the grace of Cosmic Power itself reached out to him and transformed the young boy, in a trice, to the universal self. From that moment, Arunachala shone as Paramatman, the Supreme Self made manifest in Sri Ramana. He said, "In the recesses of the lotus shaped hearts of all, beginning with Hari, there shines as absolute consciousness, the Paramatman, who is the same as Arunachala. When the mind melts with love for Him and reaches the innermost recesses of the heart, wherein he dwells as the beloved God, the subtle eye of pure intellect opens and he reveals himself as pure consciousness."

The relationship between Sri Ramana and Arunachala is a grand mystery. To use his own words, "in Tiruchuzhi, the holy town of Bhuminatha, I was born to Sundaram and his wife Alagammal. To rescue me from the worldly life, Arunachala in the form of the holy mountain in the universe, gave me His own state of Bliss, so that his heart might rejoice, so that his

own being as Awareness might shine forth and His own power might flourish." (Necklet of 9 Gems - Verse 8). Thus, when he decided to leave his house at Madurai on 29.08.1896, it was in response to the irresistable call of Arunachala, his holy Father. It was in obedience to the Father's command, the boy reached Arunachala on First September 1896. After a long and eventful journey to Tiruvannamalai, when he arrived at the holy shrine of Arunachala, the gates of the mighty temple and all the inner doors were open at an unusual hour in the early dawn and there was no one inside. It was an apt demonstration, that the Lord himself prepared the ambience to welcome his beloved son. Entering the holy shrine the boy Venkataraman reported himself to his Father saying, "Father! I have obeyed your call and come leaving everything." All the rest of Sri Ramana's resplendent life for 54 years was spent in Arunachala alone. The very thought of leaving Arunachala never seems to have occurred to him. Another great mystery was that, after leaving the temple precincts of Arunachala later, he never felt the need to enter the sanctum sanctorum ever again. At the very first encounter, the Father and the Son became one.

Sri Vedanta Desika describes Sri Rama as "Dandaka vana Jangama Parijatha" – the great wish-fulfilling-tree which moves around in the Dandakaranya forest to shower blessings on all the seekers. Likewise, Sri Ramana left his abode under the holy banyan tree where he was previously seated as Dakshinamurti, to walk, talk, instruct, write books and poems and finally guide everyone to establish themselves in the true Self. The mysterious relationship of Ramana and Arunachala was most impressively demonstrated by the celestial phenomena at the time of Sri Ramana's Mahanirvana, when a brilliant light, in the shape of a star, emanated in the south east corner of the horizon and travelled across the sky, seemingly to merge in the highest peak of Arunachala.

A hundred momentous years have gone by since Ramana stepped into this place. His whole life has got a singular transparency and simplicity. Like Sri Rama, Sri Ramana was also demonstrating the great vi[illegible]ues of accessibility and infinite love, 'Saulabhya' and 'Sausheelya'.

It is in the fitness of things that the Centenary of his Advent in Arunachala, should be befittingly celebrated on the 1st of September 1996. One of the innumerable ways in which we are paying our homage to Bhagavan

Ramana is to place at his altar this flower. We have tried to make this book one of lasting value, one which gives deep insight into the Master's life and teachings.

On this august occasion, we remember with gratitude Niranjanananda Swami who, under the Master's guidance, laid a solid foundation for Sri Ramanasramam's upkeep and growth and worked tirelessly to make a success of a similar celebration fifty years ago, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Bhagavan's arrival in Tiruvannamalai. We also remember the invaluable services of Swami Ramanananda (Sri. T. N. Venkataraman) for over 45 years to Sri Ramanasramam and the Ramana Devotees.

We of course remember Sivaprakasam Pillai, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, Muruganar, Munagala Venkataramaiah, Paul Brunton, Devaraja Mudaliar, Sri Natanananda Swami, Chadwick, Arthur Osborne, Kunju Swami, Prof. Swaminathan and the galaxy of innumerable devotees of Bhagavan who exemplify His glory.

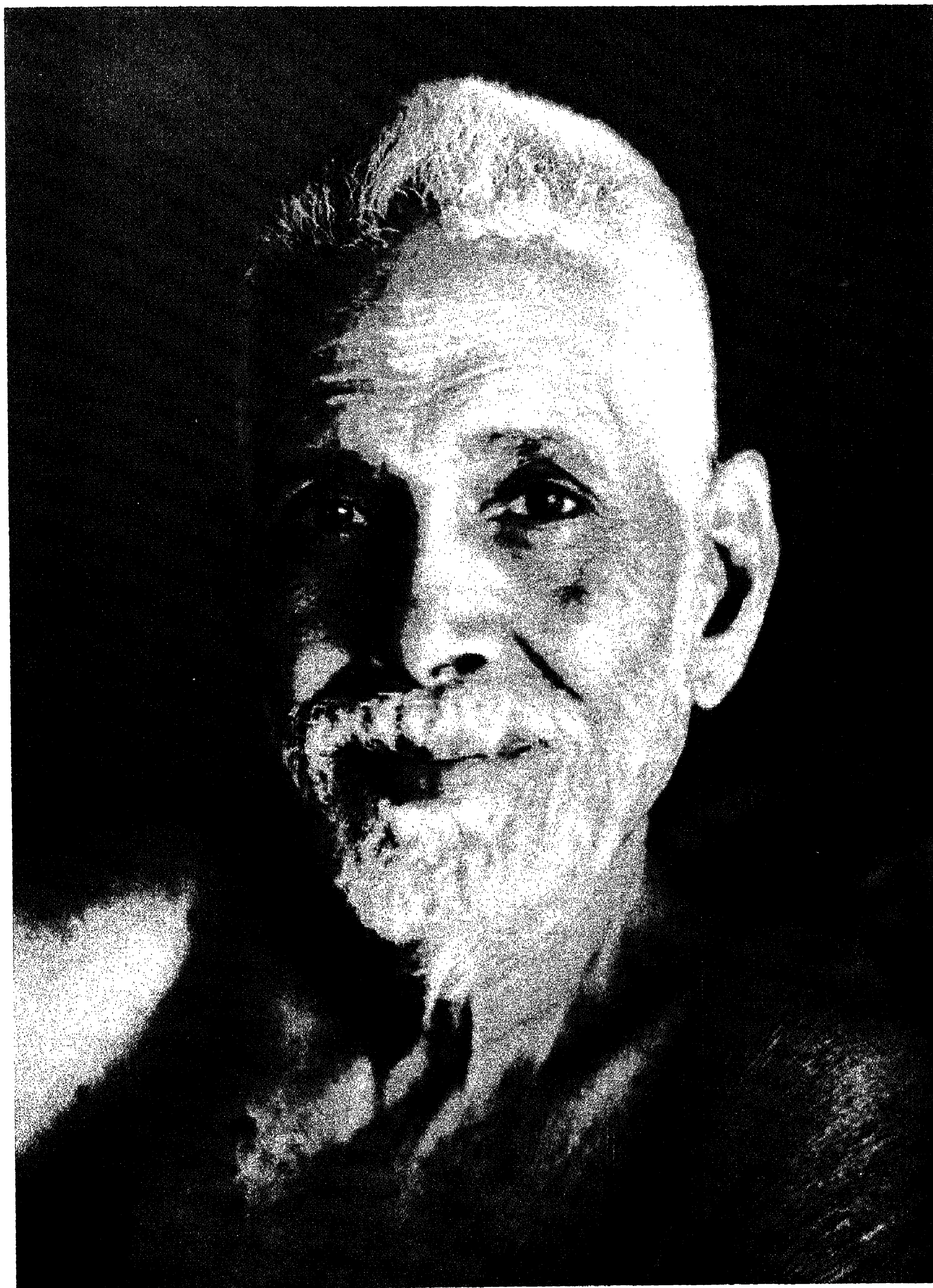
I pray to our Bhagavan Ramana that we may all feel His continued Presence in our lives so that we too may partake of His state of Natural Bliss.

May Bhagavan Sri Ramana Sat Chit Ananda - Supreme Lord of our hearts be pleased to accept this humble offering placed reverentially at His Holy Feet in His Shrine of Grace.

01.09.1996 V. S. Ramanan

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–o0o–



With Pranams from: V. Venkataraman, V. Sundararamanan



With Pranams from: Dr. Anjani Kumar

श्री रमण सुप्रभातम्

SRI RAMANA SUPRABHATAM

(MORNING HYMN ON RAMANA)

Swami Shantananda

श्रीमत्सुन्दर सुन्दर्योः सुपुत्र रमण प्रभो ।
उत्तिष्ठ ऋषिशार्दूल कर्तव्यं लोकमङ्गलम् ॥ १ ॥

Oh! Lord Ramana, blessed son of Sundaram and Alagammal, foremost among sages, arise to bestow auspiciousness on the world.

उत्तिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ भगवन्नावर्तनगरोद्भव ।
उत्तिष्ठाशेषरमण भक्तानां मङ्गलं कुरु ॥ २ ॥

Arise, awake Oh Bhagavan of Tiruchuzhi. Oh! Beautiful One who abides in all, arise to bestow auspiciousness on your devotees.

रौतीह पक्षिनिवहः परितो मयूराः
त्वद्रूप सन्निधि वियोग वशादिवैव ।
त्वामाह्वयन्ति पशवो निजगोष्ठ कोणात्
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ ३ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. Flocks of birds and peacocks, as though unable to bear their separation from you, are calling aloud. Cows, from their places in the cow-shed, are mooing, to welcome you.

शोश्रूयते निगमपाठरवः समन्तात्
विद्यार्थिनां सकलवेदविदां द्विजानाम् ।
प्रातः प्रदक्षिणपरा स्तव भक्तवर्याः
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ ४ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. Vedic chanting by the students, masters and the twice-born is heard all over the place. Your devotees engage themselves going round your Presence, early before dawn.

बाल्यात्सुवर्ण करनाम तव प्रसिद्धं
अद्यापि यच्छसि तथा शरणागतेभ्यः ।
वाञ्छाधिकं फल मयाचितमेव यस्त्वं
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ ५ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. "The Golden-handed One" is how you are reputed to have been from boyhood; even today, the wishes of those who have surrendered themselves to you, are fulfilled, beyond their expectations.

लीलागृहीत मरणात्मक भावमूलः
प्राप्तस्तदैव सहसा परमात्मबोधम् ।
मीनाक्ष्यपाङ्गकृपया मदुरानगर्यां
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ ६ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. By the grace of the side-long glance of Meenakshi, Mother Divine, you playfully experienced the death-state, while at Madurai and realised the Self forthwith.

भित्त्वा गृहादिक सुदुस्तर मोह जालं
शोणाचलेशचरणं शरणं प्रपन्नः ।
कौमार एव भगवत्कर लालित स्त्वं
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ ७ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. Even while yet a boy, you were fondled by the Supreme Lord Arunachaleswara, when you sought His shelter, after having torn asunder the impregnable net of delusion caused by attachment to home etc.

पाताललिङ्ग विवरे भगवन्नहो त्वं
दष्टश्च कीटमशकै स्तपयञ्छरीरम् ।
स्वात्मैक बोधनिरतो हतदेह बुद्धिः
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ ८ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. Oh Bhagavan! in the solitude of Patala Lingam, you were immersed in the Self, body-sense annihilated, even though it was undergoing severe austerities, bitten by insects, mosquitoes etc.

वासः कृतो हि भवता विविधस्थलेषु
स्कंदाश्रमादिषु तथा विकृताक्ष नाम्नि ।
किं त्वं ध्रुवस्य भगवन्नपरावतारः
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ ९ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. Oh Bhagavan! In various places such as Virupaksha, Skandasramam, have you stayed; are you really Dhruva reincarnate?

कोऽहं विचारनिरतः प्रथमं भव त्वं
नाहं शरीरमिति निश्चित बुद्धियुक्तः ।
सोऽहं प्रबोधयसि ते चरणानुरक्तान्
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ १० ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. You awaken your devotees to the truth, "I am that" by insisting, "You first engage yourself in self-enquiry WHO AM I and get firmly convinced that you are not the body".

श्रीकाव्यकंठ बिरुदा समलंकृतः सन्
अभ्यागतः सकल वैदिक शास्त्रवेत्ता ।
धन्योऽभवत्तव मधुस्रव दीक्षणेन
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ ११ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. Your glance, dripping with sweetness, blessed Sri Ganapati Muni, honoured with the title KAVYA KANTHAM, a scholar in the Vedas and scriptures.

स्कन्दान्यनामविदितः कविसार्वभौमः
निर्माय सद्गुरु विनिर्गत वाणिमालाम् ।
सद्यस्त्वदीय करुणोदय सिक्त गात्रः
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ १२ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. Muruganar, the great Poet Laurette composed a garland of the Sadguru's sayings (GURU VACHAKA KOVAI) and offered it to you. Born of your compassion, he drenched himself by his compositions.

गो काक जन्तुभिरपि प्रणतै स्तवाङ्घ्रौ
प्राप्ता गतिः प्रथित योगिभिरप्यलभ्या ।
को विस्मयः स्वजननी गतिमुक्तिहेतौ
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ १३ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. No wonder you were the cause of your mother's liberation. Even cows (Lakshmi), crows and other creatures which surrendered unto you attained a state beyond the reach of famous yogis.

व्यासो भवान्किमुत पार्थ सखा च कृष्णो
सद्दर्शनं च कृतवानुपदेशसारम् ।
गीतापि ते विरचिताऽनुपम प्रभावा
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ १४ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. You have composed SAD DARSANAM (on par with Upanishads), UPADESA SARAH (akin to Brahma Sutras) and RAMANA GITA, whose glory is unrivalled. Oh Great One! Are you Maharshi Vyasa or Lord Krishna, Arjuna's companion?

नाऽहं हरिः शिवगुरुर्न यतीश्वरोऽहं
हृत्कन्दरस्थरमणो ह्यरुणाचलेशो ।
पीयूषनाथ यतिमाह भवान्कृपालुः
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ १५ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. In compassion, you told Amrthanatha Yati, " I am not HARI (Vishnu) or SIVAGURU (Subrahmania) or SIVA. I AM Ramana of ARUNACHALA, the Supreme Self, the indweller of all hearts viz. ARUNACHALESWARA".

संयान्तियहाश्रमपदं कमनीय कीर्तिं
त्वद्दर्शनोत्सुकतया विविधाश्च सिद्धाः ।
बिभ्रन्ति ते खगमृगादिशरीर वेषं
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम्   ॥ १६ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. Many a Siddha comes to this Ashram of great fame with a longing to see you; they come disguised as animals and birds by taking these forms.

भ्रान्ता विभिन्न गुरु बोधित योगमार्गाः
श्रान्ताः प्रयत्नबहुलं तप आचरन्तः ।
तेषां विचारणपथा ऋजुमार्गदर्शी
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम्   ॥ १७ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. You have shown the straight-forward path of self-enquiry to those deluded in the yoga-paths advocated by various preceptors and to those weary, performing tiring austerities.

आकर्षिताः समुपयान्ति विदेशतोऽपि
मौनेन बोधयसि किं रह आत्मतत्त्वम् ।
नेच्छन्ति गन्तुमित एव गतैश्च मासैः
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम्   ॥ १८ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. Is it that the knowledge of the Self is taught by you in secret to those attracted by you and are coming from foreign countries? Even after months they are reluctant to leave your Presence.

लीलागृहीत नर वेषतनुं भवन्तं
शोणाद्रिनाथ महसः प्रियवत्सभूतम् ।
वेत्तुं हि वास्तवतया कति वा समर्थाः
श्रीशोणशैलभगवं स्तव सुप्रभातम्   ॥ १९ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. How many are capable of understanding your reality, You who have assumed a human body by sport; you have become the favourite child of the effulgent Lord of Arunachala.

शक्त्यायुधं हि न च ते न मयूर वाहो
गुप्तावतार भगवान्रमणापदेशः ।
त्वं षण्मुखः शिवसुतो वदनैकधारी
श्रीशोणशैलभगवं स्तव सुप्रभातम्   ॥ २० ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. You have secretly incarnated in the guise of Bhagavan Ramana. Although, possessing only one face, you are verily the six faced Subrahmania, Lord Siva's son, though you neither posses the Sakti weapon nor do you mount the peacock.

शोणो गिरिः स्मरणमात्र विमोक्षहेतुः
सार्थीकृतो भगवता रमणाभिधेन ।
शोणाचलेशपदपद्मसमर्पितेन
श्रीशोणशैलभगवं स्तव सुप्रभातम्   ॥ २१ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. Arunachala liberates those who merely remember IT. You Bhagavan, by dedicating yourself to the feet of Arunachaleswara, have reinforced it.

अत्याश्रमे विचरतः शुकवामदेवान्
को वेत्ति किन्तु भगवान्रमणो हि दृष्टः ।
प्रत्यक्ष एव समकालजनै रनेकैः
श्रीशोणशैलभगवं स्तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ २२ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. Who has seen Suka and Vamadeva, reputed as wandering sages, beyond the restrictions of Varnashrama? However, many contemporaneous people have actually seen Bhagavan Ramana face to face.

किं वारुणाचल विभूति कृता च कान्तिः
किं वाद्रिनाथ रमणस्य तडित्प्रभैव ?
कोऽयं प्रकाश इति वेत्तु मशक्त धीर्मे
श्रीशोणशैलभगवं स्तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ २३ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. My mind is not capable of deciding what kind of light this is. Is it the effulgence of glorious Arunachala or the scintillating lightning-like splendour of Ramana, Lord of this Hill!

कूजन्ति पक्षिनिवहा मधुरैः स्वनै स्त्वां
भ्राजन्ति पद्मनिवहा स्तरुणार्कभासा ।
मोदन्ति भक्तनिवहा श्चरणामृताशाः
श्रीशोणशैलभगवं स्तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ २४ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. Flocks of birds sing your name in melodious voices. Lotuses are glowing by the rays of the rising sun. Devotees in groups happily wait for consecrated water- CHARANAMRTHA.

तिष्ठन्ति वैदिक शिखामणयः प्रहृष्टाः
त्वत्पूजनाय धृतमङ्गल वस्तुहस्ताः ।
नार्यश्च गायनपराः पुरतः स्थितास्ते
श्रीशोणशैलभगवं स्तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ २५ ॥

Good Morning. Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. The Vedic priests, holding in their hands, auspicious materials are standing for your worship. Women, singing hymns of praise, stand before you.

गायन्ति ये प्रतिदिनं तव सुप्रभातं
विन्दन्ति सौख्यमिह बोधमयीं च दृष्टिम् ।
देहात्मभाव विरताश्च विमुक्तमायाः
आनन्दचिद्रमण भो तव सुप्रभातम् ॥ २६ ॥

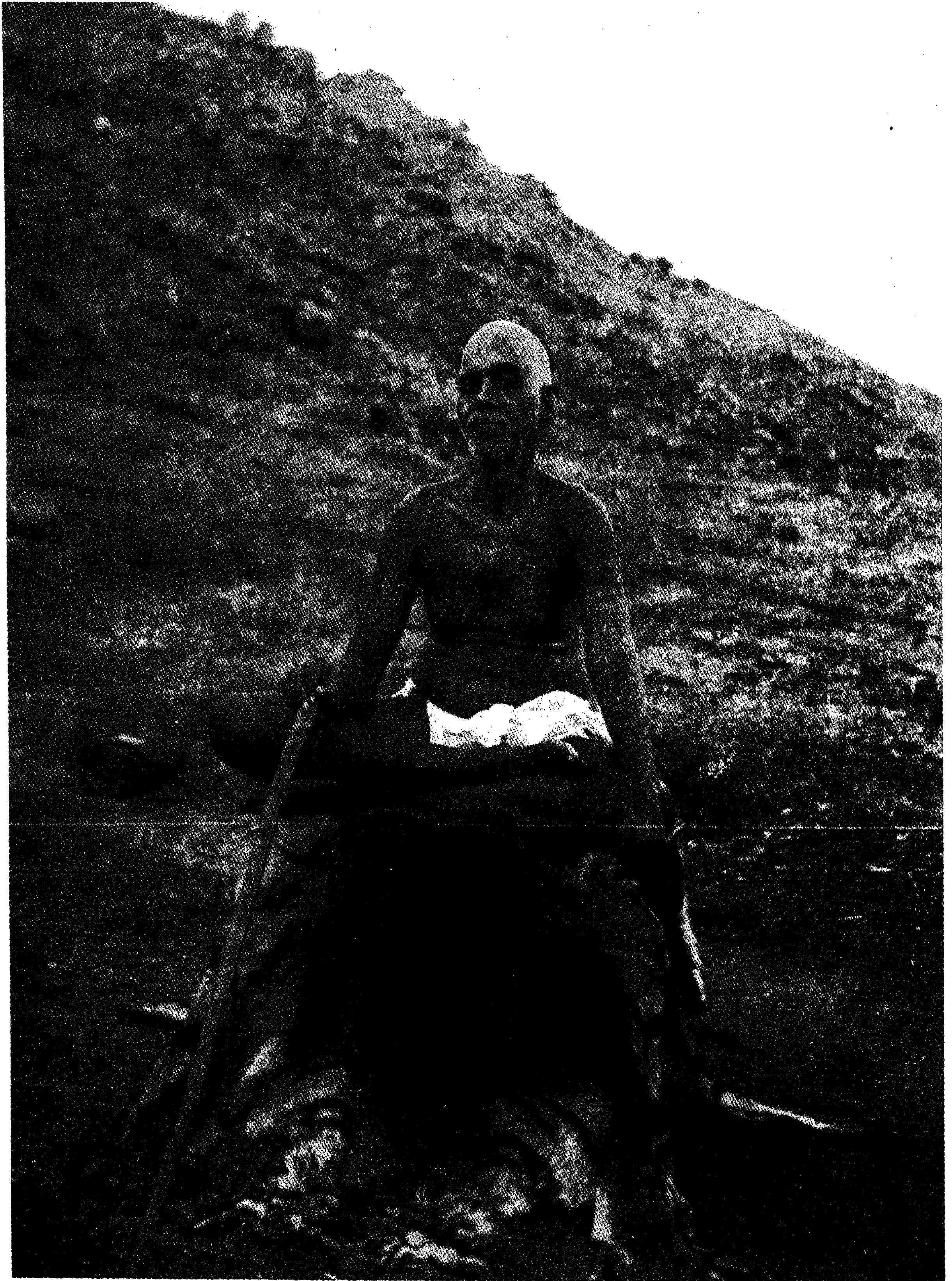
Good Morning. Oh! Ramana the Supreme Consciousness Bliss. Those who recite your 'Suprabhatam' hymn every day will be happy and gain a vision of true knowledge. They will cease to identify with the body and will be released from the clutches of Maya.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the heart, Oh Arunachala!

Bhagavan Sri Ramana



BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Swami Prakashamayananda

Mirabile Dictu! How wonderful to portray the transformation of a hardy, sturdy, ebullient, noble youth of sixteen, excelling in sports and heedless of studies, into a paragon of Divinity! What was the alchemy used for the metamorphosis? Nevertheless how is it possible for a non entity to dare to write about how Bhagavan left his home in obedience to his Father's command and attained dazzling heights save by recourse to the ecstatic hymns of stupendous saints.

Saint Tirunavukkarasu sang in rapturous vein a magnificent allegorical hymn in the lyrical form *Thiruttandagam*, in exaltation of the Divine Name.

முன்னம் அவனுடைய நாமம் கேட்டாள்
மூர்த்தி அவனிருக்கும் வண்ணம் கேட்டாள்
பின்னை அவனுடைய ஆரூர் கேட்டாள்
பெயர்த்தும் அவனுக்கே பிச்சியானாள்
அன்னையையும் அத்தனையும் அன்றே நீத்தாள்
அகன்றாள் அகலிடத்தார் ஆசாரத்தை
தன்னை மறந்தாள் தன் நாமம் கெட்டாள்
தலைப்பட்டாள் நங்கை தலைவன் தாளே

The betrothed fiancee heard the name of her beloved, made necessary enquiries about him, his home and town, became infatuated, left her parents, discarded all customary conventions, forgot her very personality, even her very name and went onward towards his feet.

So too it was when the youth Venkataraman heard the Divine Name Arunachala from a relative who answered his query as to from where he was coming. He had heard this Name a few times earlier, but on this occasion the Name became auspicious and thrilled him to the very core so much so when the command came from the Father he proceeded to Arunachala, his

own home; although this remarkable incident was forgotten temporarily, it was embedded in his heart. The Divine Name Arunachala was ambrosia to him and the first essential ingredient of the Divine alchemy.

Soon after, he was gifted with the second important ingredient of the Divine alchemy. It was satsanga. He did not have the direct association of listening to inspiring words from a holy man or being in such a presence. It was the blessings of his reading a holy scripture, Periyapuranam, the lives of the sixty-three saivite saints by Saint Sekkizhar. It stirred his spiritual aspirations, inspiring him tremendously to be like one such saint.

It reminds one of the American poet H.W.Longfellow's words:

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints in the sands of time."

The Third Divine alchemy was the climax and the crowning glory of his life. It was the sudden onslaught of fear of death that came unawares, even though he was quite hale and hearty. In his characteristic way he got over the fear without calling for help and plunged within himself reasoning logically, experiencing every sensation of death. " This body cannot be the "I" for it now lies silent and inert, while I feel the full force of my personality, of the "I" existing by itself-apart from the body, and soul. "I" am the spirit, a thing transcending the body."

Hardly half-an hour had passed and he emerged a Jivanmukta. The shackles of birth and death, transmigration, were broken . Yet he did not go forth proclaiming like Archimedes, Eureka ! Eureka! On the contrary a complete transfiguration had taken place. He lost interest in everything - home, school studies, sports, friends. The only solace since his enlightenment was to frequent the sacred shrine of Madurai Meenakshi and lose himself in a flood of tears before the sanctum of the Goddess, gods and the sixty three saints.

All were aware of the change, but none knew the cause thereof. Frequently he was rebuked, particularly by his elder brother. But he was unperturbed, and maintained equanimity. Everything turned insipid. The palate

had lost all savour as Saint Arunagirinathar sings esctatically. One who has drunk this bliss even sugar cane and honey taste bitter. In fact he threw away the packet of sweetmeats after arriving at Tiruvannamalai.

Radical change had come about. He was like a fish out of water. He had to seek fresh pastures. Who or what was thwarting him? All attachments had been cut asunder. Yet it was compassion alone that caused him to defer. After all he was a youth. Would it not be causing severe heartburn to the widowed mother as in fact it did?

To catch a glimpse of his state of mind let us hearken to Saint Manikka-vasagar's thrilling hymn

பாரொடு விண்ணாய்ப் பரந்த எம் பரனே !
பற்று நான் மற்றிலேன், கண்டாய்;
சீரொடு பொலிவாய், சிவபுரத்தரசே !
திருப்பெருந்துறையுறை சிவனே !
யாரொடு நோகேன், யார்க்கெடுத்துரைக்கேன் ?
ஆண்ட நீ அருளிலையானால்
வார்கடல் உலகில் வாழ்கிலேன், கண்டாய்;
வருக என்று அருள் புரியாயே.

O Lord, who envelopes all space from the earth to the heavens! I am devoid of any attachment to anything else save You . If You who have taken possession of my entire being do not shower Your Grace on me to whom else can I resort to and complain? It is impossible for me to live in the world any longer. Deign to call me to You without any further delay.

The Father's command came in a peculiar, unexpected manner on 29th August 1896, a red-letter day, when his elder brother, as usual, upbraided him on his being lost in contemplation while professing to be at studies. The last straw was broken. The die was cast. He told his brother that he was leaving to attend a special class and was asked to take five rupees to pay the elder's college fees. Providentially he was provided with money. It was

now that he left that magnificent letter abounding with profoundity, while abandoning home. He had not read the BHAGAVAD GITA in Madurai, but the command of Arunachala was the same as the clarion call of Lord Krishna. "Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter, sorrow not.

The spirit of Bhagavan was already surcharged and soaring aloft in ethereal realms like the chatak bird that would not stoop downwards. It was in complete detachment, perfect surrender like the kitten to its mother cat. Let us listen to Saint Manikkavasagar's ringing words

சிவன் அவன் என் சிந்தையுள் நின்ற அதனால்
அவன் அருளாலே அவன் தாள் வணங்கி

Bhagavan's thoughts were filled with Arunachala, and it is by His Grace he proceeds to worship his Feet. As s sheer act of compassion to his widowed doting mother and others he wrote the parting letter to allay any fear and soothe them.

In the letter he mentions that he was leaving in search of his Father. But what of his mother and the rest in Madurai? Let us sing another thrilling hymn of Saint Tirunavukkarasu

அப்பன் நீ அம்மை நீ ஐயனும் நீ
அன்புடைய மாமனும் மாமியும் நீ
ஒப்புடைய மாதரும் ஒண்பொருளும் நீ
ஒருகுலமும் சுற்றமும் ஒரூரும் நீ
துய்ப்பனவும் உய்ப்பனவும் தோற்றுவாய் நீ
துணையாயென் நெஞ்சந் துறப்பிப்பாய் நீ
இப்பொன் நீ இம்மணீ நீ இம்முத்தும் நீ
இறைவன் நீ எறூர்ந்த செல்வன் நீயே.

Thou art my father, my mother, Guru, uncle, aunt, life partner, wealth kith and kin, country, nay the gamut of all treasures, make me renounce in

entirety.

In similar vein is the wonderful Sanskrit sloka

Tvameva mathacha pithathvameva
Tvameva bandhuscha sakathvameva
Tvameva vidya thravinam Thwameva
Tvameva sarvam mamadeva deva

O God of Gods, thou art my mother, father, kith and kin, companion, knowledge, wealth and the totality.

The uniqueness of the letter is that it is an unsigned declaration of supreme renunciation, not only of his mother, kith and kin, but the whole mundane world. The sublime death experience had conclusively proved to him that he was not the body but the spirit transcending the I. There was no personality to sign.

It is also a proclamation of Independence. Total freedom from all bondage. Many years later he was to declare before a Judge that he was an athiashramite beyond all trammels of ashramas and disciplines, Guru and disciple, a free soul.

For future generations of seekers, spiritual aspirants, it is a legacy, a treasure, a guide, a testament. It is also the precursor to the elevating spiritual literature to gush forth from his illumined personality.

His departure from home evokes in our minds the semblance of a sukhabrahma Rishi with slight modifications warranted by the exigencies of time and place. It also brings to our mind Lord Muruga leaving for the sacred Palani. Bhagavan was already a *Jnanapazham*, fruit of wisdom and donned the ascetic's garb of Palaniandavan after his Father's darshan.

He was going for the first time to Arunachala, in search of his Father, in an unknown territory. He knew only His Name. But for him it included all things. Anyone leaving on a shorter trip, even to a well known place would take sufficient extra money for any unexpected expenses. But Bhagavan left two rupees thinking what he had taken was enough for the ticket and thereby suffered. It is wrong to say that there was any suffering for him. What suffering for him who has entrusted himself entirely to the Father. It would

have been suffering for those of another mould. On the contrary he was all joy.

It was not by accident that he arrived so late at the station even after the scheduled time and the train was even more late. Neither was it an accident that he took a ticket to Tindivanam as he referred to an old atlas. Nor was the appearance of the aged Moulvi who rectified the mistake. It was all the Supreme benevolence of Arunachala. How beautifully Saint Manikkavasagar expresses the Lord's deep concern and anxiety!

பால் நினைந்து ஊட்டும் தாயினும் சாலப்
பரிந்து, நீ பாவியே னுடைய
ஊனினை உருக்கி, உள்ளொளி பெருக்கி,
உலப்பிலா ஆனந்தமாய
தேனினைச் சொரிந்து புறம்புறம் திரிந்த
செல்வமே ! சிவ பெருமானே !
யான் உனைத் தொடர்ந்து சிக்கெனப்பிடித்தேன்,
எங்கெழுந்து அருளுவதினியே ?

You are much more intensely concerned about me than a mother thoughtful of feeding her new born babe. You have caused my body to melt in devotion to Thee and infusing Supreme Knowledge within me bestowed on me nectarine Bliss. You are following my every step, close on my heels. I have caught You in my firm grip. How can you ever escape me?

The pilgrimage homeward was not smooth sailing. Why did He want His son to undergo troubles on the way? It was all a Divine plan. He wanted him to come at least for some distance by pada yatra on foot, traversing holy land on which some centuries earlier Saint Thirugnanasambandar had walked and extolled the Lord in the temple of Arayaninallur. He wanted him to have a similar spiritual experience of the 'light' as the earlier saint. He wanted him to have further experiences too, such as fatigue and hunger and steer him and prepare him to be established as His worthy son.

1st September 1896 will ever remain a memorable hallowed day in the annals of the ever auspicious ARUNACHALA, TIRUVANNAMALAI which has from the hoary past drawn to its immaculate abode lofty souls. The child saint crossed the ocean of samsara and reached the haven of refuge. With a throbbing heart and overflowing tears in a euphony of words he entered the sanctum sanctorum the main altar and was lost in ecstasy. The Father was awaiting his arrival eagerly and had seen to it that none were present and all doors of the temple were open.

Bathing in the flood of the Father's compassion he came out radiant, replenished with the Father's overflowing Grace to fulfill His behests. Why did the Father command him to come. He wanted him to be the visible beacon light on the very hallowed pristine beacon light of the ages. The Lord Arunachala is unfathomable by mortal eye. It is only the completely dedicated who can see Him and realise Him. Lord Siva is depicted as the Yogi steeped in tapas on the beatific Kailas and in cremation grounds.

We have read of Rishis lost in meditation, unconscious of their bodies in Vedic times in the Himalayas. About two hundred and fifty years ago the great Avadhuta Saint Sadasiva Brahmendra was roaming about steeped in samadhi, in a blissful state, unconscious of his body, in Tamil Nadu. Is this possible in this atomic age? Lord Siva brought his son to glorify Tiruvannamalai a hundred years ago. Lord Arunachala wanted the enlightened son to be an embodiment of that deep meditation and samadhi. That a Maharshi as of old, in a loin cloth in the vicinity of a town was in an underground Pathala Lingam lost in samadhi, unconscious of the degradations caused to his body by scorpion bites and other reptiles and continued so in adjoining places and in the sacred hill, with unkempt hair, cared for by devotees sent by his Father was a rapturous event.

Devotees were drawn to Bhagavan as a magnet. They were enlightened by His very darshan. He flourished as a Mouna Guru. Later earnest seekers sought guidance and refuge. To clarify and guide seekers he spoke with authority and clarity from his own realisation, and from the scriptures brought to him, whose content he could easily grasp at the very first reading as they corroborated his own direct experiences.

Bhagavan who was not a serious student in his boyhood was now gifted

by Goddess Sarasvathi. With the boon of poesy He composed illuminating books on the highest vedanta and blissful hymns charged with devotion.

After his mother's samadhi he was bidden to leave the hills in 1922 and reside adjoining it. By his Father's command Sri Ramanasramam started functioning. A new chapter in Bhagavan's life commenced. Devotees from far and wide could come in large numbers and be uplifted.

With the passage of time, due to his absorption in the Self from his youth, his body had been neglected. Disease took possession of his body towards the end of his life. But Bhagavan was at all times a Sthithaprajna, He remained for ever serene with wonderful composure.

Let us listen to Saint Manikkavasagar

அன்றே என்தன் ஆவியும்
உடலும் உடைமை எல்லாமும்
குன்றே அனையாய்! என்னை ஆட்
கொண்ட போதே கொண்டிலையோ?
இன்றோர் இடையூ றெனக்குண்டோ?
எண்தோள், முக்கண், எம்மானே!
நன்றே செய்வாய்; பிழை செய்வாய்;
நானோ இதற்கு நாயகமே?

O Lord, did you not take possession of my entire being on that memorable moment when you took my life, body and all what I owned? Hence what difficulty do I undergo now? Whatever you may do to me, good or bad, does not matter in the least. One of this Saint's utterances is pregnant with meaning அழுதால் உன்னைப் பெறலாமே. By crying for you, you can be attained.

Bhagavan's copious tears flowed on many an occasion. The auspicious moment had come for his departure to his Father. Surrounded by a surging crowd of anxious devotees who had thronged the holy premises, in the midst

of fervent cries of the sacred mantra Arunachala Siva with tears of bliss and the flash of a shooting star at the very moment Bhagavan entered Maha Nirvana on 14th April 1950.

By the Father's infinite grace Sri Ramanasramam with the effulgent Bhagavan's samadhi shrine and priceless publications continues its dedicated invaluable services to the seekers.

May Bhagavan's advent to Arunachala be the harbinger of transcendental bliss throughout the universe.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

-oOo-

A boy, I came to Thee,
Not knowing what Thou wert,
I came up here and saw,
And found Thou wert a Hill.

But who is then the seer?
Deep into that I probed.
No seer then remained;
No mind survived at all
To say that this I saw,
Or e'en to say didn't
As Dakshinamurthi once,
Silent Thou taught'st the truth,
Thou dost the same e'en now,
Thou silent standing Hill!
If Thou forbear to speak
Who else can voice Thy truth?

Arunachala Ashtakam Ver. 1 and 2

SRI RAMANA AND ARUNACHALA

G. V. Subbaramayya

The relationship between Sri Ramana and Arunachala is a grand mystery. To view it from our level ascribing an individuality to both, it was surely antenatal and supramundane. In terms of human relationship, it was that of son and father. That is why Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni has described Sri Ramana as the human incarnation of God Skanda the Son of the Supreme Lord Siva.

It is commonly supposed that Sri Ramana heard the *first* mention of ARUNACHALA from a relative who just returned from Tiruvannamalai to Madura, and that the hearing of the name sent a thrill through Sri Ramana's veins. Sri Bhagavan himself told this writer that this version was somewhat erroneous. Even from childhood, he had been hearing the Sanskrit verse that "the mere remembrance of ARUNACHALA confers Mukti (salvation)". But he had no definite notion of what ARUNACHALA meant. He had a vague idea that ARUNACHALA might be some holiest form of God Almighty. When his relative casually said that he returned from Arunachala, the very thought that a mortal could come from that Supreme Being was to him a thrilling revelation. When the visitor further explained that 'Arunachala' was only Tiruvannamalai which the boy had already known as the name of a place, it had the effect of anti climax. It was like a fall from the sublime to the ludicrous, and the thrill at once subsided.

With the death-like trance which instantly snapped the thread of the ego and gave him Self-Realisation, there arose in the person of Sri Ramana an unaccountable pang which grew in time till it became unbearable agony. It created an aversion in him to his school-lessons and other routine activities. It inclined him to study the lives of saints, to visit the temple of Meenakshi near by and pray for Divine Grace and to sit still in Samadhi (Self-absorption) every now and then. Thus it transformed the nature of the boy Ramana completely and it finally disappeared only when he entered the sanctum-sanctorum of the great shrine at Tiruvannamalai and beheld the 'Lingam' of Arunachala.

When his elder brother noticed him sitting in Samadhi before his books and rebuked him saying, "Why should one who behaves thus retain all this?",

the thought ARUNACHALA at once flashed upon his mind and gripped his entire being. "Yes, I must no longer be here 'cabined, cribbed, confined'. ARUNACHALA is calling. He shall be my heaven, my home." This resolve that now shaped itself within the boy's mind, became all-absorbing. *It* determined and carried out his secret flight from Madura without any initiative of his own. *It* dictated his parting letter to his brother. "I have in search of my Father and in obedience to His command, started from here". That was why the letter was left unsigned. Every circumstance favoured his 'enterprise'. The extra-class the train's delay, the strange Moulvi's direction to change at Villupuram, free feeding on the way, Muthukrishna Bhagavatar's loan - these and other incidents prove beyond doubt the hand of Arunachala holding and drawing the little one to Himself. When he arrived at the holy shrine, the gates of the three compound walls and all the inner doors were open at an unusual hour in the early morning and there was no one inside. It was clear that Arunachala Himself had thus prepared to welcome His beloved boy. Entering the Holy Presence, Sri Ramana reported himself, saying, "O Father I have obeyed Your call and come leaving off everything."

The most notable event of Sri Ramana's journey was his vision of dazzling light (Tejo Darshan) at Arayaninallur. It was the very spot where Saint Jnanasambandar had experienced a similar vision on his pilgrimage to Arunachala. Both Sri Jnanasambandar and Sri Ramana had thus the first glimpse of ARUNACHALA the far-famed Tejo-Lingam (the sign of Light) at the identical place. So Kavyakantha has sung that Sri Jnanasambandar and Sri Ramana are both reincarnations of God Skanda.

All the rest of Sri Ramana's life for four and fifty years was spent in Arunachala alone. Within the temple compound, in the outskirts of the town, up the Hill and down the Hill, he dwelt throughout his life. Never once - not even during the times when the place was declared dangerous on account of epidemics - did he stray away from the environs of Arunachala. The very thought of leaving Arunachala never seems to have occurred to him. From his mother down to a casual visitor, so many people attempted to induce him to go elsewhere. His written reply to his mother's entreaties was typical and significant: "Whatever is destined not to happen will never happen, try how hard you may. Whatever is destined to happen must happen, do what you may to prevent it." In other words he declared that Arunachala and he were destined to be in separable. One evening, Sri Ramana related to this

writer and others seated around him, how in his vision Arunachala appeared a citadel of Heaven full of shrines and gods. One morning, when Sri Ramana delayed to return from his constitutional and this writer with another devotee went up and met him, he said smiling "As the weather is fine, I have been strolling here. This hill is like my *own* home. Whenever I am in Arunachala, I forget myself." While relating the glories of Arunachala he would indeed forget himself, the story of Arunachala was his favourite theme. He often used to say that, while all other sacred hills and shrines were but the abodes of various Gods, Arunachala is the Supreme God Himself and that going round Arunachala is the direct worship of God Almighty. Once, in the old Hall, they were reciting Kavyakantha's 'forty verses in praise of Ramana', one of which extolls the unique good fortune of Arunachala for being the chosen abode of Sri Ramana and attributes it to the accumulated merit of providing home for so many sages. On hearing this, Sri Ramana smiled and asked, "But why what merit did Arunachala provide home for those sages?" By this question Sri Ramana meant obviously to emphasise the fact that Arunachala is the Supreme God and naturally therefore drew to Himself Sri Ramana as well as all those sages of yore.

"The Five Hymns to Arunachala" are the 'magnum opus' of Sri Ramana in devotional, lyric poetry. Of them the first is "Akshara-Mana-Malai" (the Marital Garland of letters). It was composed by young Ramana in response to the request of a devotee for a song to be sung while wandering in the town for Bhiksha (holy alms). It is an acrostic of one hundred and eight couplets with the initial letters in the alphabetical order, and with a popular refrain. It unfolds an allegorical love-story and depicts the 'Madhura Bhava' (erotic sentiment) of devotion. Arunachala is the lover and the singer is the beloved. The lover made secret love to the beloved while she was in her parental home. At the mere thought of his name, he stole her heart. He eloped with her stealthily and brought her here. While she is now harassed by so many enemies, he remains unmoved as a mountain. She remonstrates and complains of her lover's neglect and indifference. "Having entered my home and lured me to yours, why do you keep me prisoner in your cavern? ... Having seduced and ravished me, if you deny me union and abandon me now, would it be chivalry? Nay, such desertion will be a memorial column of shame for you ..... Having called me and lured me here, it is writ large in your forehead to look after my well being. If you will not unite with me, I shall be melting away in tears of anguish.. Pray rain your mercy on me ere your fire

consumes me to ashes." So runs her love plait. Then for her harsh words of remonstrance, she apologises to her lover and prays for the bliss of complete Union and merging. "Pray close me in, limb to limb, body to body, or I am lost .... Let us embrace, one in the Real Self, on the soft flower-bed of the Mind.... Come and sport with me in the open space of the Heart where there is neither night or day.... May I be absorbed into you as food is assimilated into the feeder." At last the prayer is fulfilled. The love is consummated in marriage, and with the bride's invocation to the bridegroom, "O Lord Arunachala, throw around me your garland and let me place on your breast this garland strung by me", the song concludes. In this poem, Arunachala is described and addressed in the most fascinating terms. Arunachala is 'the real meaning of OM unexcelled, unparalelled', 'the magnet that attracts the iron filings of devotees and holds them fast', 'the Ocean of Grace in the mould of a mountain', 'the gem of fire sparkling all round', 'the treasure of Divine Grace got without seeking', 'the elixir of all life's ills' 'the spider whose spreading web entices into its meshes and devours all ego's', 'the wizard who exercises the ghost of the ego and then himself possesses the being', 'the mountain-drug for all madness', 'the undifferentiated effulgence of final knowledge in Vedanta'. The word 'Arul' (Grace) occurs in nearly every stanza, so that the whole song may be called a rhapsody of Grace. This love-lyric is indeed an allegory of Sri Ramana's own life-story and so is full of autobiographical interest. The initial mention of 'Alagu' and 'Sundaram' the parents of Sri Ramana, strikes the key-note to the personal strain running throughout the song. Like the sonnets of Shakespeare, it furnishes the key to unlock the treasures of the poet's heart. While sounding the depths of philosophical wisdom, this song stirs the tenderest chords of human heart and makes the most daring flights of love-romance in the spiritual firmament. It was and is sung on all auspicious occasions in the Ashramam. Though Sri Ramana always declined to be drawn into a discussion of its diverse interpretations he would sit up in a trance of ecstasy whenever it is sung. Just before Sri Ramana's Mahanirvana, this hymn was being sung in chorus by the devotees who assembled outside his room. Sri Ramana opened his eyes, then as he closed his eyes, tears of ecstasy gushed from their outer edges and he breathed his last. So this song into which Sri Ramana had breathed the essence of his Divine Spirit became appropriately the back-ground music to his life's finale, like the glow of mellow light around the setting sun.

Next in chronological order comes "Navamanimalai" (The Garland of

Nine Gems). This is a collection of nine casual verses in various metres. Its underlying sentiment is also love and devotion to Arunachala. It explains at the outset the idea of 'Achala Tandavam' (motionless dance) of the Lord. He is static and dynamic at the same time. The glorious Source that absorbs and transcends both the aspects is this Arunachala. The verbal root-meaning of A-Ru-Na is also set forth. It means respectively either Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Knowledge- Bliss), or the Supreme Self - the individual Self - their identity, or That - Thou-Art. 'Achala' means the Great One. That is why the mere recollection of the name 'Arunachala' confers Mukti instantly. The rest of the poem is a call to complete self-surrender and a moving prayer for forgiveness of faults and for deliverance. It is impossible to ford the sea of Samsara and get up the shore unless Arunachala out of his more than maternal love stretches forth His hand of Grace. This song is also autobiographical. It relates how Sri Ramana was born of virtuous Sundaram and Alagu in sacred Tiruchuzhi and was rescued from the coils of Ignorance even in early youth and raised by Arunachala to his own seat. The poem is, in short, a paeon of praise and thanksgiving.

The next hymn is "Arunachala Padikam" (The Ten Verses on Arunachala). It really consists of one invocatory verse and ten stanzas, all in the same metre. It observes the rule of "Mukta-Pada-Grastam", that is to say, the last word of each verse is repeated as the first word of the next verse, so that the whole poem reads like a chain of 'linked sweetness long drawn out'. It is also a devotional love lyric and is full of autobiographical interest. Arunachala the lover has stolen the guileless singer in early youth for thinking of Him but once, and having drawn the beloved to His Feet and keeping her long like a frog amidst the lotus-stalks, is slowly consuming her (ego). The singer surrenders to the will of her Lord and prays for completing the process of devouring and for changing the frog into a bee that tastes the honey of the lotus-blossom. The song concludes with a warning and an appeal. It warns the worldly-wise saying, "Lo: I have newly discovered a magnet-mountain that attracts all beings who think of it even once, makes them still like itself and preys upon their sweet lives (egos). That magnet-mountain is Arunachala. So beware and keep off". At the same time, the singer makes a clarion-call to all kindred spirits who have renounced the worldly life in quest of the means of deliverance. The singer shouts: "Here is the panacea, the sovereign remedy, the wonder-drug for all the distractions and ills of life. If you merely think of it but once, it cures you. It kills without killing. It

kills the ego without killing the Self. Many have been thus saved like me. It is none other than Arunachala. You, all afflicted beings, know this and be saved."

The next and grandest hymn is "Arunachala Ashtakam" (The Eight Verses on Aruna- chala). Sri Ramana himself related how it was composed in the course of a walk round the sacred Hill. All of a sudden, the first word of the hymn flashed into his mind and with an irresistible urge composed itself into the first stanza. Then the last word of the stanza lingered in the mind and clamoured for further expansion into the second stanza. The same process was repeated in the other stanzas, and at the end of the eighth stanza the urge for expression automatically ceased. So the stanzas are of uniform metre and observe the rule of 'Mukta-pada-grastam' like the previous hymn. This hymn is a master-piece of philosophical poetry in which both thought and style reach their high-water mark. For its superb symphony, it is a universal favourite among music-lovers. It is also autobiographical and reveals the mysterious association of Arunachala with Sri Ramana from childhood and the part played by Arunachala in his process of Self-Realisation. Arunachala is the Real Self that manifests Itself when the ego-mind traced back through Self-enquiry merges in its Source. This song is distinguished for the daring originality of its thought and imagery. "To search for the essential inner truth of Thyself (Arunachala) is like going round the earth to see the sky. It is like the sugar-doll diving to measure the depth of the ocean." "To quest for God elsewhere turning away from Thyself (Arunachala) is like searching for darkness with a light." "Those who fail to visualise the one, matchless, resplendent diamond of Arunachala are like the blind that cannot see the sun before them." "The mind that has contacted Thee (Arunachala) and is sparkling itself like a cut or polished gem will not need another light to kindle it, just as a sensitive plate exposed to the sun will not take on impression afterwards." 'A mysterious Shakti (Power) in Thee (Arunachala) which however is not apart from Thyself, illumines with the reflection of Thy pure Light is latent, subtle dark mists which then manifest *within* as thoughts whirling in the rolls of Prarabdha (Past Karma), and are projected *without* across the lens of the mind and the outgoing senses as the passing world-picture upon the unchanging screen of Thyself (Arunachala)". "Whose dives within for tracing the source of the 'I' - thought and attains the seat of the Heart (Arunachala) becomes at once the sole Monarch of monarchs and transcends all in and out, vice and virtue, birth and death, happiness and misery, light

and darkness, and other dreamy dualities." "Just as the waters rising from the sea as vapour and coming down as rain, must flow back into the sea and fatigued, must needs return to the earth for rest, so every being must finally retrace its way to the Source and merge in Thee, Thou Ocean of Bliss, O Arunachala." It will be seen that in the above passages the poet makes use of irony and of metaphors called from Nature and from arts and science such as photography and cinema. This is all the more remarkable as Sri Ramana had never handled a camera nor had he ever been to a cinema show.

The last and the most famous hymn is the one entitled "Arunachala Pancharatnam" (Five Gems to Arunachala). While the other four hymns were Tamil compositions, this one was composed by Sri Ramana in Sanskrit, at the request of Kavyakantha to serve as introduction to "Sri Ramana Gita". It was later rendered into Tamil by the author himself. It has become the daily prayer of all devotees. These 'Five Gems' have been praised by Kavyakantha saying that they 'contain the quintessence of the whole Vedanta, and though terse and brief are all- comprehensive like 'Sutras' (aphorisms). As Sri Ramana never studied Sanskrit, how he could compose this Sanskrit classic is a wonder which can only be explained on the ground that he had realised 'THAT by knowing which everything else is known.' As to the Maharshis of yore so to Sri Ramana Maharshi, the usual order of thought and speech was reversed. Words flashed first, and their sense followed next. In their depiction of Arunachala as 'Sarvatma' (The Universal Self) these 'five gems' resemble the famous "Dakshinamurthi Ashtakam". The opening stanza invokes Arunachala as 'Nectareous Ocean full of grace by whose splendour the entire Universe is engulfed' and it prays to Him, the Supreme Soul 'to be the sun for the full blossoming of the lotus-mind'. The second stanza expounds Arunachala as 'Swarupa' (the Source) in whom 'all this panorama arises, exists and dissolves'. It further explains how Arunachala manifests in the Heart as 'I' the Self and so is Himself named the Heart. The third stanza describes the path of 'Jnana' (Self-Enquiry) and how on knowing one's Self, one merges in Arunachala as the river in the ocean. The fourth stanza unfolds the path of 'Yoga' (Meditation). "The Yogi with controlled breath and concentrated mind, meditating on Thee within, beholds in Thee, O Arunachala, Thy Light Transcendent". The final stanza depicts both the paths of 'Bhakti' (Devotion) and 'Karma' (Action). The devotee who with dedicated mind beholds Arunachala alone or the man of action whoever reverentially serves all as the form of Arunachala shines immersed in the Bliss of Arunachala. So this

hymn within a brief compass is all-comprehensive and stands out as the most glorious monument of Sri Ramana's relationship to Arunachala.

This mysterious relationship was most impressively demonstrated by the celestial phenomenon at the time of Sri Ramana's 'Mahanirvana'. At that very moment, a brilliant light in the shape of a huge star emanated in the south-east corner of the horizon and trailing majestically across the sky, seemed to merge in the highest peak of Arunachala. This was witnessed by so many people outside. It was to all mortals an ocular, heavenly revelation of the Life-Light of Sri Ramana ascending and merging in the Universal Light of the Supreme Self that is Arunachala. Indeed Sri Ramana was Arunachala's Self in human shape incarnate; and Arunachala is Sri Ramana himself in mountain-mould. In essence, both Sri Ramana and Arunachala are one and the same that is the Supreme Self.

(Call Divine June 1, 1955)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

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Well can one say of Thee
That Thou in form art seen.
Yet truly can he speak
Thee formless and unseen
Ah! who can know Thy nature?
Can any plumb Thy depths?
To sound the Ocean's depth
With measuring tape in hand
A sugar doll once plunged
And lost itself for e'er.
Thus trying Thee to know,
Thyself must one become.

Arunachala Ashtakam Ver. 3

BHAGAVAN RAMANA'S MESSAGE

K. Swaminathan

Sri Ramana, the sage of Arunachala, embodied in our own times the eternal Indian value of *moksha, nirvana, kaivalya*, the liberation from phenomenal existence, which is the common ground and final goal of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. This freedom comes only from *jnana*, or enlightenment. Works, discipline and devotion help to purify the mind and prepare it for the illumination of *jnana.* The *jnani* or Awakened One lives an egoless life, enjoying the bliss of being-awareness.

The Upanishads, the Gita, *Viveka Chudamani, Jivanmukti Viveka* and other works describe in detail the ways of the "one liberated in life". He lives in the world, but is not attached to it. He knows no fear and none is afraid of him. Seeing him, hearing about him and thinking of him, all beings are delighted and filled with faith, hope and courage. He forms a living link between the *vyavaharika* or empirical world of space and time and the *paramarthika* world of transcendental awareness. He enables us to share as a present aesthetic experience the "oneness of all selves" and he also convinces us of the practical possibility of our own permanent abidance in the *sahaja* or natural state of pure awareness.

Carl Jung hails Sri Ramana as a "true son of the Indian earth" and adds that his life and teachings carry a warning message not only to Indians, but to all humanity in the modern age when "it threatens to lose itself in the chaos of its unconsciousness and lack of self control."

All competent observers are agreed that in Sri Ramana we have the latest example of a *jnani*, the sweetest and most satisfying fruit of Indian culture. As Duncan Greenless says, "I have taken all the descriptions of the *jivanmukta* I could find in any scripture - Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Christian, Muslim or Jain. I have watched Bhagavan under all kinds of circumstances and checked up what I have seen with those descriptions. He alone of all the men I have seen seems to dwell always in *sahaja samadhi* (the normal, natural state of choiceless awareness)."

Wei Wu Wei (Terence Gray), a prolific and precise writer on *advaita* and Buddhism, found in the Maharshi a fusion of both these traditions and

admired in particular his *soulabhya,* his easy accessibility and readiness to reveal the highest truth to all who turned to him. "Who else is there to whom anyone can reasonably point, of our own days, who lived for half a century, available to all at all times, in a state of as perfect identification with Godhead as would seem possible to an apparent individual manifestation?" Hundreds of us knew him personally as such, and of whom else can that be said? What a marvelous thing it is to have had such a contemporary and to be able to compare his words and his living of life with the words and description left us by scriptures, of past sages? In Bhagavan alone can we test those words and those scriptures, and see for ourselves that they are not a dream or a phantasy."

In the words of Muruganar,
"Seeing all beings in himself,
And himself in all,
Humbler than the humblest,
Through meekness the Supreme,
Conceals and yet reveals,
His true supremacy."

The sage claimed nothing special or supernatural for himself. His bliss was only constant awareness of the being which is at the heart of every person. He simply embodied the truth that to be fully and naturally human is to be truly divine. He proved, to the satisfaction of all observers, Tagore's thesis that *moksha*, the end of religion is not the descent of divinity, but the fulfillment of humanity. As "science is the liberation of our knowledge in the universal reason, which is human reason; religion is the liberation of our individual personality in the universal person, who is human all the same."

Sanatana Dharma lives, not in any book or body of doctrines or established church, but in the actual daily lives of the Hindus and in the poetry of the gods they worship, enjoying what they may not understand. Its ineffable message is the consubstaniality and interplay of god and man, the amphibian nature of human existence alternating between two elements, the transcendental and the immanent. This message is renewed perennially by the actual *moksha* achieved by men like Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana and by the discovery of new dimensions of action and experience by men like Gandhiji and Sri Aurobindo. It is not without significance that the worshipper of the Mother Goddess found the bliss of beatitude in Christian and Muslim modes

of worship, that the servant of Sri Rama strove to extend the sovereignty of *dharma* to the public sphere as in private life, that he who saw Narayana everywhere became a master of yoga, and that the lad who loved Siva overcame death and lived among mortals the life immortal through four and fifty years.

Because these four spiritual giants represent so clearly and effectively the four well-worn paths of *Bhakti, Karma,* Yoga, and *jnana,* historians of Hinduism venture to describe its current renascence as comprehensive and complete and hence likely to yield beneficent social results.

Our gods are manifestations and living, growing symbols of one Reality; these paths cross and re cross one another. But like the lovely colours of the rainbow, they are distinct enough, even though they emerge from and merge again in the one white light of Pure Awareness, whose other name is Siva. Life is larger than logic and keeps growing ever larger and more complex. Since myths and *muktas* are larger than our hum drum life, we gain much when we leave logic behind and turn to these more reliable sources of light and strength.

Despite the Maharshi's profound reverence for and frequent references to the gods, his predominant concern with impersonal *jnana* brings him close to the Buddha. In insisting on right meditation as the basis of right action and in maintaining strict silence on irrelevant, speculative issues like the nature of God and our past and future lives, Sri Ramana is concerned with orthopraxis, not orthodoxy. In his technique of self-enquiry, the exploration of consciousness, which gives energy and meaning to the whole of human life and breaks down the barriers between sacred and secular, he resembles the scientist. It is in this fusion of *jnana* with *karma*, of awareness with daily action, that the Maharshi's teaching meets more than half way the need of modern man for a philosophy and a way of life which could harmonize in practice the two highest human values, *moksha* (freedom) and *dharma*(responsibility). When Being branches out into relationships and flows forward as function, one discovers that all worthwhile work is service and all service is sheer joy.

The *Koham* quest, the "Who am I" enquiry, is recommended for all men and women, not for Hindus only and not for "religious people" only. It calls for no prescribed ritual and no special outward activity. Every action in private or public life becomes a sacrament when the Self is in attendance. We

have only to remember that whatever we are, parent, citizen or official, we are "the Self also". *Moksha* (*veedu*, freedom, home, heaven, transcendental Being) is ever with us, for we are in essence gods. But we are also men and women and our human *dharma*, our daily task divine, cannot wait. This is the lesson taught by Vasishta to Sri Rama, the archetypal man, and repeated by Sri Ramana to every one of us today. "Holding firmly at heart to the truth of your Being, play like a hero your part on the world-stage, inwardly calm and detached but assuming zeal and joy, stirrings and aversions, initiative and effort, and performing outward actions appropriate to your role in various situations."

Steadily and honestly pursued, the *Koham* quest enables any sane, healthy person to bring the timeless into time and to live, without much effort, a more abundant and creative life. By weakening the desire for pleasure, it whets the relish for eternity. Glimpses of *Ananda* or transcendental freedom provide light and energy for the recognition and practice of *dharma* or social responsibility. Familiarity with the idea and the experience that "awareness alone are we and we are all awareness" frees one from bondage to the body and the separate mind. When we love the Self as awareness, the knowledge and love of other selves become easy and natural. Our Being finds fulfillment in satisfying other people's material and mental needs.

Gandhiji, who believes in *karma-mukti*, declares : "Today self - realization is impossible without service of and identification with the poorest." Maharshi Ramana, clad in his *Kaupina*, identified himself with all creatures. For the blindness of the rich, no less than the penury of the poor, calls for compassion and cure. Once the *sphurana*, the bliss of self-awareness, has released the spring of love, other people matter, ideas and causes and the general good matter, selfless action and self forgetful love flow spontaneously from the plenitude of Being.

Jnana and Karma, inner awareness and outer action, become alternate movements of the one self. We breathe in and breathe out the universal air. We are aware in and with the universal mind. Unheard, unseen, the egoless man sweetens his circle like sugar in milk, and does not hurt it like grit in the eye.

The Maharshi's teaching, succinctly formulated in *Upadesasara*, recog-

nizes the high ancillary value of *karma, bhakti* and yoga, but firmly insists on *jnana* as the common origin, real import and ultimate end of all spiritual paths. Self-enquiry, the scientific method of Vijnana, and self-surrender, the emotional approach of Upasana, run together preserving the integrity of the individual and revealing the unity of all selves. The self as awareness and being cannot be known, it can only be enjoyed as bliss or exercised as behaviour. As self-reverence, self-knowledge, self- control lead life to sovereign power, inner Shanti takes the form of Shakti, the power of love.

Adi Sankara argued with scholars and refuted their doctrines to establish a thesis. Sri Ramana addresses himself to common people and in the process meets with precision the intellectual and moral needs of modern man. He shows us how to utilize the light and warmth of the Self, the sun in every human heart.

Four clear advantages of this teaching; free from any shadow of the past, can be listed. It is time for the human race to face the Sun and let the shadows fall behind.

(i) The teaching is *holistic.* The self is indivisible and Being as awareness and bliss is indivisible. There are a thousand ways of cooperating with the Sun. But the way of the tree is the most natural and effective. Rootedness is essential for the right use of sun-shine. By driving one back to the antic roots of the individual and the race and planting one in one's specific spatio-temporal predicament, the teaching retains the sap of bliss in every circumstance and saves one from false identification with concepts and constructs. One plays many roles, but they are all played in situations which possess wholeness. Retaining one's own wholeness and respecting the wholeness of other persons, one exteriorises and manipulates *things.* Vasishta's advice to Sri Rama and chapter 10 (Sangh Vidya) of *Ramana Gita* bring out the complementarity between inner *shanti* and outer *shakti*, the power of love issuing as appropriate action in any given situation.

(ii) It is *heuristic.* The eternal is related to the empirical and can and should be tested by its effect on our present life. Exploration, experiment, and experience are both social and individual. In action we share both joy and responsibility with others. But learning is always individual. Wisdom cannot be taught, it can only be learnt. We work on ourselves even while working

for others. If awareness informs action, action increases, widens, deepens awareness. Life becomes one continuous learning. One listens, observes, loves, serves, but one does not teach or exploit others. One learns by taking the utmost responsibility on oneself and giving the utmost freedom to others. In self-enquiry, one feels here and now an access of awareness and bliss, one senses the harmony of human life; one does not look for comfort in some post-mortem world.

(iii) It is *ironic.* It is not polemic. It conduces to peace, not conflict. I am the whole situation and I am also all other persons involved in it. This situation is my body for the time being. It is to be handled as a whole. My action or my deliberate non-action tends towards reconciliation, never to worsening of a conflict. In the ongoing traffic, I relieve congestion by rising above it.

(iv) It is *serendipitous.* One who is concerned with the future rather than the past, who is striving to become what he really is, is always gaining something, whether it is outer achievement or inner bliss. For him earth's failure is heaven's success. Doing one's *swadharma* one grows in height or girth, in inner joy or the power of love. Every child in a well- ordered society should normally and naturally ripen into a sage if only the educational, economic, and political systems are based on a proper understanding of the nature and destiny of man.

The words, "I am in my Father, ye in me, and I in you," are not a figure of speech, they are a statement of fact.

Blake said: "We are all co-existent with God, members of the divine body. We are partakers of the divine nature .... Jesus Christ is the only God! But then so am I, and so are you." This may be heresy in the West, but is sound orthodoxy in India. Sri Ramana's message to modern man is a call to recapture the spiritual dimension of life on earth. As he told his earliest English disciple, "That one point where all religions meet is the realisation, - not in some mystical sense, but in the most worldly, most literal and everyday sense, and the more worldly and everyday and practical the better - of the fact that God is everything and everything is God."

The search for the Self starts one on a great adventure. It is a combination of a love story and a detective story. The ego parted from the universal

self and longing for reunion with it rejoices in its own dissolution. Darkness delights in dying in the light, the mortal in immortality. The food enjoys being eaten even as it becomes the eater.

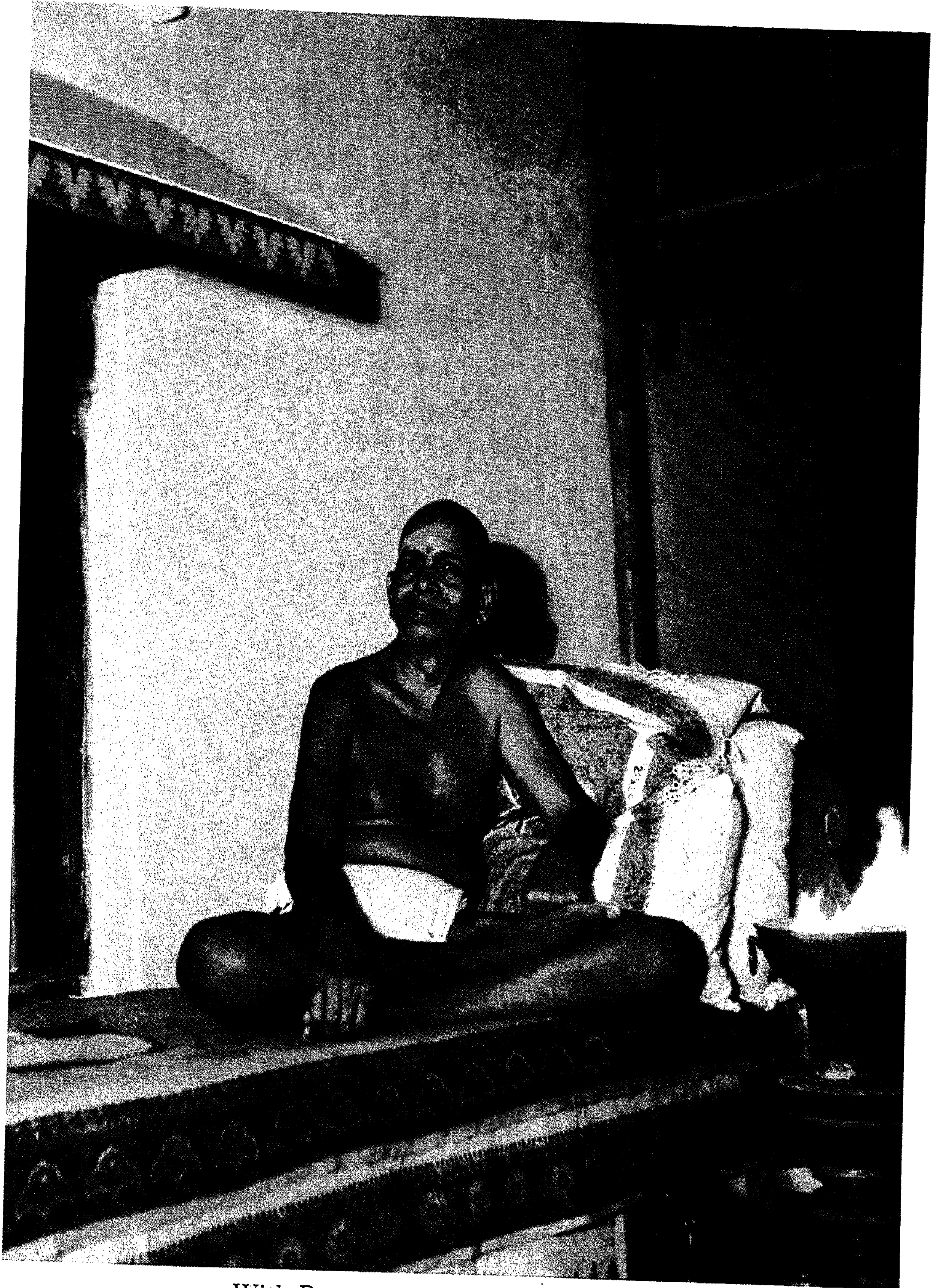
The Maharshi founded no organisation, initiated no movement. He only reminds us of the sun within each human heart and gives us a new orientation. He could well say with William James: "I am for those tiny, invisible, moral forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world, like so many soft rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, which yet, if you give them time, will rend the hardest monuments of man's pride."

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

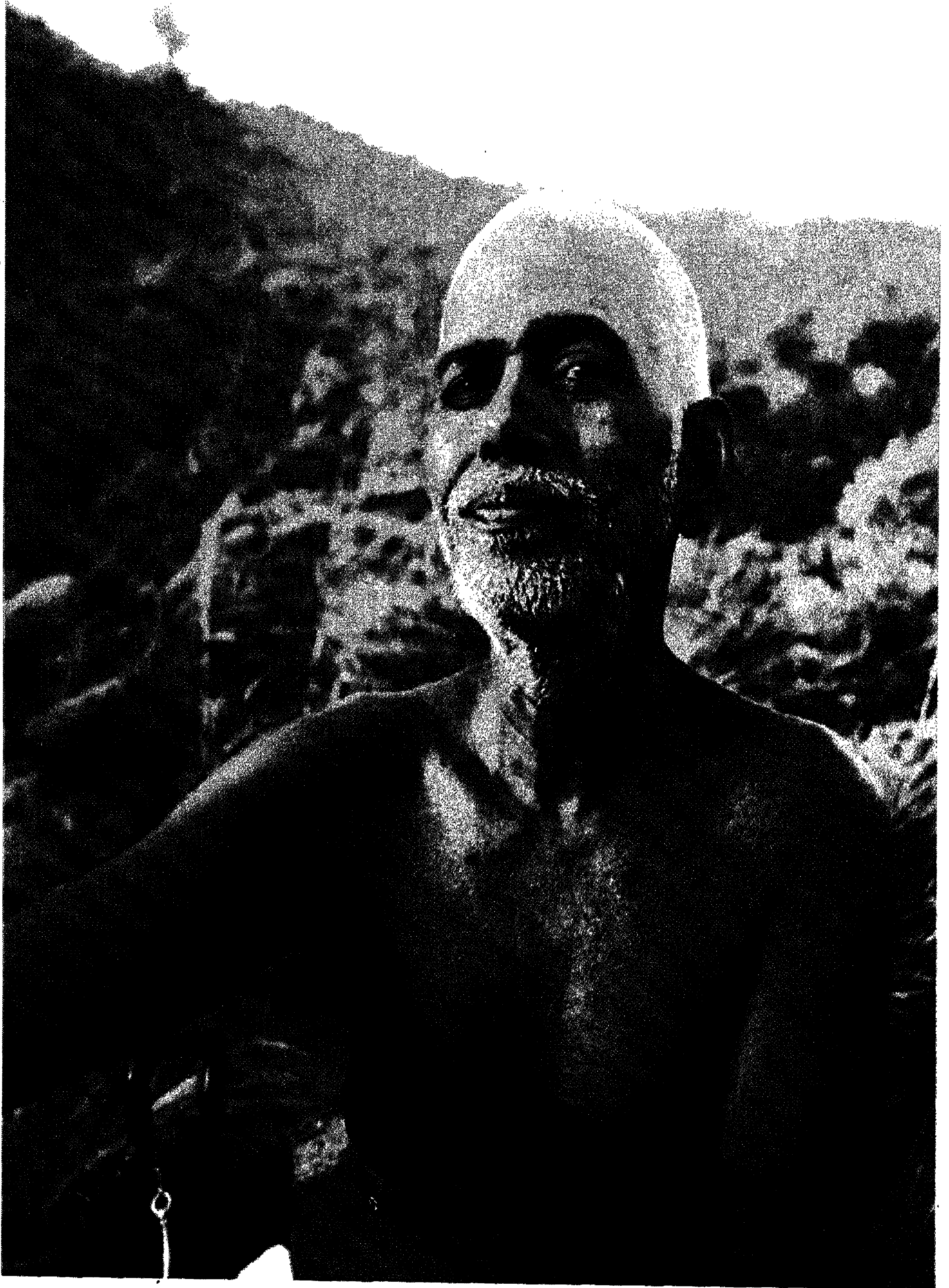
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Oh, Thou art That which is;
The only thing that is.
Yet men run here and there
In quest of many Gods!
But raise inquiry's torch
And seek the truth of Gods,
These Gods then fly away
As darkness from the light.
And what remains is Thou,
That gave each creed its God.
Thy light is as the Sun's.
Who sees not Thee is blind.
Oh, mayst thou shed Thy light,
Within my heart for ever!

Arunachala Ashtakam Ver. 4



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FLOOD OF LOVE

K. Subrahmanian

When we are in love,we are possessed by it, we are obsessed with it. We don't choose to love, we are taken by storm, we are swept off our feet. The heart rules the head when we are in love. Reason melts away when we are in love. When we are in love, we seek the company of the person we love. There is joy even at the mention of the name of the person we love. When we are in love, we are not 'me-centered', we are 'other-centered'. Love is an infatuation, a madness, a joyous madness. We are acted upon rather than act when in love. Love comes into being unawares. We don't plan it, we don't move gradually towards it. We fall in love.

Sri Bhagavan has not said even once that he loved Arunachala. He says that Arunachala created a passion for Him and appeals to him 'to robe him with His love'. 'Out of my house you enticed me, into the chamber of my heart you entered, and then little by little, you revealed the many mansions of your house, your infinite freedom, O Arunachala.' (97)

'You asked me, did you not, to come to you? Very well. I have come. Now, it is your responsibility to look after me, O Arunachala.' (94)

'You aimed at me and sped the arrow of your grace and now you are devouring me alive, O Arunachala.' (92)

'Who was it that, unknown to all, stupefied me and robbed me of my senses, O Arunachala?' (89)

'My Arunachala, you have driven out of me the evil spirit of worldliness and possessed me so that I can never shake you off, and have made me indifferent to the world.' (71)

'You made me give up my craze for the world and made me crazy for you, O Arunachala. Now give me a medicine to cure every kind of madness.' (66)

'In my loveless heart you planted love of you, O Arunachala. Now do not betray me.' (60)

'Wealth benignant, holy grace that came to me unsought, dispel my mind's bewilderment, O Arunachala.' (49)

'Unless you join me, O Arunachala, this body will melt away in a river of tears and I shall die.' (34)

'Remove this cloth, expose me naked and then clothe me with your loving grace, O Arunachala.' (30)

'As snow in water melts, let me dissolve as love in you who is all love, O Arunachala.' (101)

In all these verses in *Aksharamanamalai,* Sri Bhagavan begs for the love of Arunachala. He wants Arunachala to make him love Arunachala. He wants to be chosen as he can't choose. Drawn by Arunachala, Sri Bhagavan went to Arunachala. He never left Tiruvannamalai even for a single day. He was in the company of the beloved all the time. The company of the person one loves gives joy. Sri Bhagavan never asked for anything. The only thing he prayed for was that he should always love Arunachala. In the seventh stanza of *The Necklace of Nine Gems*, Sri Bhagavan addressing Arunachala says: 'Do what you will, my darling, but grant me a flood of Love for your Lotus Feet.'

We can't love God. Only He can make us love Him. Only He can make us think of Him. We can only pray that He grant us the flood of Love. In that flood, our individuality will be washed away. Our sense of 'me' and 'mine' will be gone. We can't drive out our ego. It must be drowned in his flood of Love.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

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See love. Hear love. Reach out
And touch love. Eat love, sweet love.
Smell love, for love is but
The Self's awareness itself.

Garland of Guru's Sayings Ver. 655

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA THE IMMANENT ONE

S. Ram Mohan

"To teach without words and to be useful without action – few among men are capable of this." Thus spoke LAOTSE, the Chinese Philosopher. In Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, we see the living testimony to this capability. The same Ramana, who is described as the whitest spot in the white space of advaita, also shines as the pinnacle of compassion and the epitome of empathy. His matchless love, which enveloped all living beings, crow, monkey, or a little squirrel, cascaded at the same time as great devotion towards the chosen deity, Arunachala. In the words of a renowned philosopher "Without apparently indulging in act of initiation", the grace of his very presence, nay, the grace that flowed by the very thought of him, gave marvellous solutions to the problems of the devotees.

The grace of Sri Ramana is not something which is alien to his philosophy of advaita. His method of Self Enquiry is not something which is a search in the vacuum or in the desert sands of dry sunya-vada. The man who starts Self Enquiry in the Ramana Way, gets showered and tempered with the grace of Sri Ramana. In his book of Zen Buddhism, Chris Humphreys explains this phenomena "when Prajna is attained, Karuna or compassion, its counterpart, its undivided opposite is free to work its way." Understanding the transcendent reality as the immanent one, as the undivided Self, is Prajna. For a person who is established in the Self, his compassion freely envelopes the entire universe. It is as true of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi as it is true of Buddha. When one gets established in the state of advaita, the false notion that the creation exists apart from the Self, gets destroyed. He sees the entire creation in his Self and as himself. This is what Humphreys mentioned as the 'law of life' which manifested in the life of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Every act of Sri Ramana in his life is a vindication of this 'law of life', as also of his unlimited compassion.

During Virupaksha days, in summer, he used to shift to the Mango-Cave as water sources used to dry up around Virupaksha cave. Near the mango-cave, at mid-day, women used to come there for water, with heavy loads of grass on their heads. While narrating this, Sri Bhagavan said with

great compassion, "Poor people! they start from their homes early in the morning. After partaking a little gruel, they go up the hill and secure a head load of grass!". As soon as they reached the mango tree cave, they knew they were near the great stream of love. They used to drop their bundles, bend down and ask the Swamy to first throw water down their backs. After having received the shower of water on their scorched backs, they used to recover from their exhaustion. Sri Bhagavan would pour water in their cupped hands to quench their thirst. They alone could experience the great joy of being splashed with water from the holy hands of Bhagavan, as they were bathed by his grace. As he himself remarked, "It is only when one experiences the oppressive heat that one knowns the relief of the coolness of the water." He knew that they would be coming at that hour and would be waiting, ready with the water. His thought flowed with compassion when he knew that others would not allow them to touch the water in the holy tank as they were from the lower castes (a practice, common to that by-gone era, now eradicated by law) and there was no water anywhere else. In his own words, "They cannot have food unless they sell grass and get money. They have children at home and they must reach home to look after their children. They come with hope that Swamy will supply water." He had his own method of feeding them. He used to mix lot of water with a small quantity of rice which he had with him. After adding salt and dry ginger to this gruel, he used to feed them this ambrosia. The taste of this gruel, which was like nectar, ended their hunger, as well as their bondage. It is mentioned in Sri Rudram that the milk-maids are the first ones to identify Lord Siva in the resplendent break of the dawn. Likewise these illiterate grass cutters could reach him and his grace reached out to them.

The scriptures say that a Jivan Mukta becomes one with the cosmic spirit. He not only gets submerged in its boundless peace but also manifests its great creative powers. Scriptures refer to this as SARSHTITHA. That is, for one who is established in the Brahman, any flash of thought even if it did not exist before, comes into fruition; that is, 'it happens'. This is the concept of miraculous grace. It is beyond time and space. The great grace of Ramana flowed through his right hand, which he kept over the heart of his dying mother. The latencies of several previous births got telescoped into few seconds of experiences through this miraculous touch. Prajna subsided and mother was liberated. Likewise, with the very last look at Bhagavan's benign face, all the bondages of the holy cow Lakshmi were sundered. Within

few minutes, she merged with the Infinite. Her liberation was confirmed by Bhagavan – in his own words.

Thus, Sri Ramana Maharshi exemplifies the statement of Sri Sankara Bhagavadpada in his Subrahmanya Bhujangam -

Jaya Tvam Sada-Mukti-Dhana-Isa Suno.

"Oh Lord! the great son of Iswara, who bestows the great gift of liberation on your devotees! Victory unto thee!". Sri Bhagavan, who is considered as the very incarnation of Skanda, likewise gave the great gift of his matchless grace to all those who came to him, whatever may be their status in life.

His grace knew no limits or boundaries. It was not confined to the chosen few only. It reached out to all, from the lowest of the low to the greatest of the great. In his presence, their consciousness used to undergo a transformation. The experiences which they considered very significant hitherto started fading away and they had the great spiritual awakening, of oneness with the universal spirit, for which they longed through the ages. When Sri Nayana at the height of his yogic practices, trembling and suffering with the flame of Kundalini rising to his head surrendered to Bhagavan, Sri Ramana effortlessly, with the cool breeze of his looks relieved him of his misery. Similar was the experience of Sri Janaki Mata. When great yogic powers arose within her, she found it impossible to control them. With a trembling frame, while she waited for his grace, the benign look of Sri Bhagavan fell on her. Those few seconds were enough to put an end to her months of agony and she was plunged into the great ocean of peace, in which she lived gracefully thereafter.

His grace reached out to all alike. Sri Bharathi Krishna Thirtha, Jagat Guru Sankaracharya of Puri, had high reverence for Bhagavan, recognising him as the true Universal Guru. Declining the special seat offered to him when he visited the ashram the Sanakaracharya sat on the ground before the great master and continued to look at him. Sri Bhagavan looked at him with unwavering compassion. Neither spoke. A boundless river of peace flowed by. The Acharya asked for a clarification on *Avachya Yoga.* When the Acharya expressed his inability to understand the verbal explanation , Sri Bhagavan just showered his benign look on him for about half an hour. With tears of joy flowing down his face and with hands folded on his head, the Jagat Guru exclaimed "Bhagavan! I have now understood it."

As the living embodiment of the transcendent reality Sri Bhagavan lived as the one beyond all asramas and all varnas. He was the true 'atyasrami'. He had been the great light to people of all asramas and varnas. In his own words, he belonged to the famed genre of Sukha, Rishabha, Jada Bharatha and others. He is the one who transcended everything and is truly universal. In his own words "I do not consider anyone to be my disciple. I have neither sought upadesa from anyone nor do I give upadesa. If the people call themselves my disciples, I do not approve or disapprove. In my view all are alike." The only authority he recognised is the great cosmic power which brought him to reside on the holy hill. He did not even give a name to himself. He says "By what name am I to be called? I myself do not know."

At the young age of 16, the doors of Brahmanubhava opened within him and he continued to be in that state of bliss till he cast off his mortal frame. Questioned about his identity as Lord Subrahmanya, he replied that he considers himself as Subrahmanya "in the same way as an idol is placed as Subrahmanya." He lived in that exemplary level of 'gunateetha' - one who has transcended the Gunas.

At the same time he also observed samanya dharmas for the benefit of the masses. Though he was an exemplary atyasrami, he manifested the facets of all the asramas. On the very first day of his arrival at Arunachala, when someone offered to take him for the tonsure of his head he accepted it as God's mandate. At the same time he did not follow the ritualistic steps of taking a dip in the pond after tonsure. The cosmic Lord Himself bathed him with showers from above. He wore only a pure white loin cloth. Like a Sanyasi he carried a water-pitcher in his hand but never carried the sacred staff, the other mandatory accompaniment. Thereafter he used to sport matted locks. Later when the same barber appeared on a full moon day in the Pachaiamman Temple, Sri Ramana considered it as a divine will and agreed to get tonsured.

He lived for ever in bliss. Nobody had ever seen him asleep. Any time whenever people around him woke up during night, they could see him fully awake. At the same time, with infinite compassion he took care not to disturb the devotees' sleep, when he had to go out in the night.

It is true that, as Sri Ramakrishna said, great Mahatmas like Sri Ramana do not have a gross-mind like we have. We have minds which are bundles of thoughts. But, as Sri Ramana himself says, jnanis have "Suddhamanas",

which is full of grace. 'Suddhamanas' channelises their grace to all living beings and empathises with all creation. They share our joys and agonies. Like a crystal which manifests different colours when lights from coloured objects fall on it, the purified mind of a jnani empathises with all that come within its range. Bhagavan too exemplified this on several occasions. The gentle cool breeze of Sri Ramana blew over everybody and cooled the heat of their Samsara. His simplicity likewise was remarkable. Like a child he played with all children. He played by carrying them occasionally on his back. He used to swim across the temple pond, often carrying blessed kids on his back.

The transcendent guru Sri Ramana, tells us that Guru is really the Self, not the external entity. "Those who do not understand that the jnana-guru is the formless Supreme-Space, though he appears in the human form, commit the vilest of crimes." (Guru Vachaka Kovai 274). Sri Bhagavan's directive is straight and simple. "Steadfastly abide in the Existence-consciousness. If the mind is fixed in Sadhana, Divine Grace will rise from within on its own and subjugating the mind, will take it to the Heart." Divine Grace is "nothing but the perfect clarity of our existence, the form of the Supreme Self (Paramatman)".

The Maharshi with his resplendent spirituality and immanent divine grace continues to illumine entire humanity. In the words of Sri Sankara "thus having crossed the mighty ocean of samsara, they enable others also to cross the same with no apparent motive in doing so." He further explains the phenomenon in his PRAUDANUBHUTHI. "Like a well-ripened fruit, the Guru has attained full swanubhava and thus goes beyond the mighty magic of duality. Yet, to teach the aspirant the great truth of advaita, he re-creates his mind and continues to live in the mortal frame. The ever-living presence of Sri Ramana exemplifies this. After living in that state, Sri Bhagavan continues to guide all of us through his dazzling cosmic presence. Let us pray unto him in his own words!

"Oh Arunachala! .... can I have then any grievance? Do whatever thou wilt; but grant me, O beloved, only ever increasing love for thy holy feet". (Necklet of Nine Gems).

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

WE ARE GOD

V. Ganesan

"We are God (*Iswara*). *Iswara Drishti* (i.e., seeing ourselves as God) is itself Divine Grace. So we need Divine Grace to get God's Grace". Maharshi smiles. (Talks, p.34)

Maulana Mansur al-Hallaj of the Middle East was sent to the gallows by the Orthodoxy for saying *'Ana'l Haqq'* ("I am God"). That was in the 9th Century A.D. Centuries earlier than that, nearly two millennia before now, a carpenter's son of Nazareth in Israel, who said " I and my Father are one" and "I am the Truth" was nailed to the Cross at the instance of the Orthodoxy. A few centuries before the Good Shepherd was thus eaten up by the bad wolves of Orthodoxy, an Athenian sculptor turned philosopher called Socrates was made to drink a deadly cup of hemlock for the 'heinous crime' of telling the Athenians 'Gnothi Seauton' ("Know Thyself").

Mansur, Jesus and Socrates were all men of Truth, true God-men. What they said was nothing but the Truth. Yet, why were they killed by their fellowmen? Mind you, their killers were all religious people, not nonbelievers.

The killers believed that God is out there, up there, beyond there, not within. They thought, as men still do, that men and women, with their bodies and minds are different from one another and that God ruled over their destinies. Mansur, Jesus and Socrates, on the contrary, had lost their individuality and found the ever-lasting, limitless, luminous Truth - God - within them, called by them variously as *Haq, Allah, Eli* and so on. When they said 'I' they meant the one universal Self within each being, whereas to their killers 'I' was no more than the person uttering that word.

Even in this country, where the Mahavakyas like **अहं ब्रह्मास्मि** ("I am Brahman"), **तत् त्वम् असि** ("You are That" [Brahman]) etc. were given to men thousands of years ago, there has been a long philosophical feud between those who said that the individual soul is God, Impersonal Absolute Itself and those who said 'No, they are two different things; the jiva (individual) is just an aspect of God, the personal God, and the part cannot hold the Whole.'

Bhagavan Ramana, in his benedictory verse to his Tamil translation of Acharya Sankara's Atma Bodha said "Can Sankara, the Enlightener of the Self, be different from one's own Self? Who but He does this day, abiding as the inmost Self in one, speak this in the Tamil language?" It would therefore not be proper to speak of Bhagavan Ramana and Acharya Sankara or, for that matter, Mansur, Jesus, Socrates, Buddha and other Self realized beings as different beings; they were the same Self manifesting in various ways at various times.

However, the manifestation of the Self as Bhagavan Ramana was one of perfect Silence and Stillness. Sri Ramana made no assertions and never preached nor discoursed. He was a mountain of Peace and Stillness. Clad in a loin-cloth and in the early years, his hair unkempt and nails uncut, he was immersed in himself; he had no need to instruct much less reform people because to his illumined eyes, the world was *Brahman* and everyone was That only. Yet, people, both the learned and the unlettered revered him as a Swami, an ascetic. One day a man of monumental Sanskrit and scriptural scholarship and matchless poetic skill came, saw him and was conquered, and bade his students refer to him thenceforth as *'Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi'*. How did the Mahakavi, the great poet, recognise Sri Ramana as Maharshi, the great seer, as *Bhagavan* (the Divine One, the Blessed One)? Ganapati Muni, for that was his name, said, "Thanks to God-given knowledge"!

During the 54 years of Bhagavan Ramana's silent spiritual reign from Arunachala, countless seekers of Wisdom came to him from far and near. They had only to spend a brief while in his presence before they realised that here was a Being totally devoid of body consciousness and ego and here was truly Bhagavan, the Divine One.

Sri Ramana did not have to proclaim "I am God" or "I am *Brahman*". The truth stuck out a thousand miles, literally. What is more, in his *Sannidhya* (Presence) one became impersonal and understood his unity with all beings. When one saw that Bhagavan not merely showed equality and fraternity with men and women, birds, goats, cows, monkeys, deer, dogs, snakes and so on, but was in total indivisible oneness with them, one spontaneously felt the Godhood of every living thing, including plants and trees.

Sri Kunju Swami, the old Ashramite, often used to say that while an *Avatara* is not a total manifestation of the Self, a *Mahajnani* like Bhagavan is. Actually, Sri Bhagavan said that since the Self ever is, where is the question of *avatarana* or descent. Sri Ramana, whom Sri Aurobindo once referred as a "spiritual colossus", did not move among men as an awesome, Superior Being, not even as a first among equals, not even as one among equals, but as the Pure, Non-dual Essence. There were not two of any kind for Sri Bhagavan. The Guru and the disciples, men and women, jnani and ajnani, the good and the bad, man and beast were all the One Self for him. Indeed, "We are That". The plural We vanishes into the singular, non-dual *That.* *"நானுதியா துள்ள நிலை நாம் அதுவாயுள்ள நிலை"*

—உள்ளது நாற்பது-27

("The State in which the 'I' does not arise is the State in which We Are That" - Forty verses on Reality. V.27).

The idea of God (Iswara, Yahweh or Jehovah, Allah, Ahura Mazda and so on) has obsessed man since millennia. A western thinker, when asked what, according to him, was the greatest human invention, said 'God'. Voltaire, the French savant and satirist par excellence, said if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him. Of Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher, it is said, that in one book he denied God, in a second he affirmed God and in a third, *The Critique of Judgement* he found him! Another German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzche, declared "God is dead". When someone knocked at the door of the Sufi Saint Bayazid and asked, "Is Bayazid there?" the saint answered "Is anybody here except God?" Gandhiji who kept saying "God is Truth" later started saying "Truth is God".

On his returning to earth, the first Soviet Cosmonaut said that he could not find God anywhere in space. When St. John of the Cross of Spain came out after serving a term in prison he said, "When I was in the prison, I was so intoxicated with God that when I came out I could not see anything except Him, everywhere"!

So, there have been in every country believers in God, nonbelievers and agnostics who neither believed nor disbelieved. There are those who find God everywhere, those who find Him only in place of worship and others who don't see Him anywhere"!

J. Krishnamurti told even his young students "God is disorder". But

he always added, if you have perfect inward order and gave all your love to someone or something then that is God. So God is disorder but total order and harmony is God. The Buddha also slurred over God because he was *'Buddha'* the awakened!

But 'awakening' is Godhood. An awakened man realises that his Consciousness is God. The disorder that exists in our sleepy, dreamy lives vanishes when we wake up and find our true identity.

Bhagavan Ramana says that our so-called wakeful state is a dream, only it is a long dream.

The Jnani, the awakened, Self-realised one says:

"I slept and dreamt that the world was real.
I woke and found that the world is a dream, the Self is real".

He also found, "I am Brahmån" or "Sivoham" ("I am Siva"), or *Ana'l Haqq* or, even better as Bhagavan Ramana pointed out, *"I AM"*.

What a beautiful word the Hebrew language has for God: *"Yahweh"* which means *"I AM"*. *Jehovah* is the anglicised form of the word Yahweh. Sri Ramana said that the Old Testament's "I AM that I AM" is even better than *"Aham Brahmasmi"* ("I AM *Brahman*") as a description of the Self.

Mansur al-Hallaj, Jesus of Nazareth, Bayazid, Acharya Sankara, Bhagavan Ramana and other liberated beings had lost their ego 'I' and gained the Self, "I AM". Self, God, I AM, *Brahman, Chit* are all different words for the same Reality. How can the ignorant who are limited to the 'inert' body and 'phantom' mind, know the sacred import of the words "We Are God", *'Ana'l Haqq'*?

Why do men live in oblivion of their divine identity? Why do they gape in disbelief when told "I AM God", "You Are God", "We Are God"? Or when told that the world is an illusion and the Self is Real?

Why do men live in sorrow and conflict? Why do men behave like little, limited creatures of circumstances? Why is the human family divided by ever so many walls between man and man? Is Self-Realisation within every man's reach or is it only for the chosen few?

Not only these but a thousand other questions are answered by Bhagavan Ramana mostly in Silence and at times in a few chosen words. Those who make a careful study of his printed works will find the whole riddle of life and death solved for them.

Bhagavan always says "Know yourself first. What kind of knowledge is the knowledge of diverse things when the Self that is true Knowledge remains unknown?" He often asked the questioner "Who asks the question?" That turned the questioner inwards. Many realised in Bhagavan's presence that he is the core of one's own being and that he dwells in one's own Heart. Sri Balarama Reddiar who had come to Bhagavan after spending some years at the Ashram at Pondicherry, said to himself, *"This is Sarveswara"* ("This is the Lord of all")!

"Turn Inward", "Be". The *Sadguru* in human form pushes you inward and when you really, wholly turn inward, the *Sadguru* who is ever present in everyone as the Self from within, takes you over. "Be the Self".

One is Self. One is Chit, Pure Consciousness. One is God because the pure Consciousness is limitless, eternal, all-pervasive, non-dual and is perfect Bliss and Peace. In Bhagavan Ramana the external and internal Guru are one. If seeing the Self is seeing God, seeing Sri Ramana is to be the Self. So instant is the transmission!

There is nothing higher or more sacred than the Pure Consciousness and nothing is apart from it. There is no God other than It. Self-Realisation is that State in which one has the plenary experience of one's own nature, one's *Chit- Swaroopa,* which is "without beginning and end. It is unbroken Awareness-Bliss".

("தனாதியில் யாதெனத் தான் தெரிகிற்பின்
னனாதி யனந்தசத் துந்தீ பற
யகண்ட சிதானந்த முந்தீபற")

- Upadesa Undiyar, V.28.

That is the Sat, the Reality "which is always the true nature of everyone" *("என்றும் எவர்க்கும் இயல்பாயுள பொருள்")*

Bhagavan taught this Truth by being the Self. His words, both written and spoken, have tremendous power and beauty (though they are few), while his Silence, is unfathomable. He is verily the eternal Silent Teacher! One realised in his presence, sooner or later, that to know God, we have to be God and God we are. Now and for ever! What separated us from our Godhood is our individuality, our ego, which is a “Phantom”, a myth.

(“இருக்கும் இயற்கையால் ஈசசீவர்கள்
ஒருபொருளேயாவர் உந்தீபற
உபாதி உணர்வே வேறு உந்தீபற.

தன்னை உபாதிவிட்டு ஓர்வது தான் ஈசன்
தன்னை உணர்வதாம் உந்தீபற
தானாய் ஒளிர்வதால் உந்தீபற”

—*உபதேச உந்தியார்,* 24, 25.)

“In the realm of Reality, God and man are one and the same. Any difference felt [of separation] is but gross ignorance”.

“Ridding oneself of this ignorance is to realise [The Truth] that one is [none other than] God, who throbs [from within] as I AM”. (Upadesa Undiyar, V.24 and 25)

Bhagavan Ramana ever is, for the Self is eternal. What is never is not. When a devotee asked him how to know the power of God, he said:

“You say *‘I AM’* That is it. What else can say *‘I AM’*? One’s own being is His Power. The trouble arises only when one says, ‘I am this or I am that, such and such’. Do not do it. Be yourself. That is all”. (Talks, p.456)

The whole teaching of Bhagavan Ramana can be distilled in the words “Be”, “Abide as the Self”. We are the Self which is *Sat, Atman, Brahman,* God.

The killers destroyed Mansur, Jesus, Socrates, Gandhi and other men of

God. But they killed the body, not the Self. The body never was, the Self ever is.

According to an Eastern legend, "Man lifted the veil from the Goddess of Sais and saw - Himself". Sri Bhagavan lifts the veil from Man and shows him to be God!

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–o0o–

Thou art the central string
Sustaining earthly creeds
E'en as thou dost sustain
Whatever moves or lives.
When mind cremates itself
And inward vision gains,
And further plunges deep,
Ah! then is seen Thy light.
When once Thy light is gained,
Avaunt! all earthly fears;
All objects - shows - depart.
The mind's a sensitive plate.
If Brahman's solar rays
Do once upon it fall
'T is sensitive no more;
There objects of the world
No more impression make.
And is there aught in truth
Beside Thy glorious self?

Arunachala Ashtakam Ver. 5

TIMELESS PRESENCE

Nome

Silence. Absolute Silence. Eternal Silence. This is Sri Bhagavan's Presence. Unfettered by time or space. His Presence transcends the illusory boundaries of life and death. Making itself known, it destroys delusion and bondage and brings liberation from all imagination, from all that is unreal. Sri Bhagavan's Presence is the Presence of Siva himself, the Reality of Brahman itself.

The effect of His perpetual Silence is impossible to measure as the Silence itself is beyond all mental conception. His every word, glance, and motion is permeated by this Silence, yet the Silence itself is indefinable, ungraspable, in terms of body, speech and mind. In this Silence, delusion evaporates and illusion vanishes. His silent Presence allows no one to stand apart from it. One is altogether consumed; the only complete knowing of this Silence is in direct experience in which the individual is no more. In this Silence, no notion prevails - not even the slightest trace - and its flood of peace and unalterable happiness completely eliminates the individual and its labyrinthine tale of unendurable lives and deaths without number. In this Silence, all that is objective and the "I" return to their source, and the birthless, deathless, creationless Reality comprehends itself. In this Silence, the only Reality, nothing else has ever been, is, or will ever be.

His Grace is unbounded. It operates in countless ways incomprehensible to the mind. Its scope, touching and illuminating so many lives in so many ways, whether recognized for what it is or invisible to the ideas of the perceiver, causes one to stand in thought-free awe for a timeless moment before prostrating, without hesitation, in full blissful namaskaram. His Grace knows no impediment, because of its omnipotence and its omnipresence. His Grace, which is identical to His Presence, is ineffable in its blissfulness, inconceivable in its vastness, unfathomable in its depth, immeasurable in its compassion, illimitable in its power, indisputable in its Truth, and unalterable in its eternity.

By Grace alone is Liberation from the imagined bondage attained. By Grace alone is there Realization of the true Self. By Grace alone does meditation occur and the profound enquiry "Who am I?", succeed in awakening one

from the dream of an ego with its illusory world-appearance. By Grace alone devotion arises in the heart. By Grace alone is there freedom, happiness and peace.

With Grace, He has revealed the Teaching, which is the direct experience of Reality and the quintessence of Advaita Vedanta. It is the Self's own Knowledge of the Self, of the nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss. In graceful Silence, He revealed it - His own Existence - and by his Grace. His precious words of instruction have been preserved in the hearts of disciples and devotees. The very books and pictures that are so sacred to us all are due to His Grace. That we should have the opportunity to see them, to meditate upon them, and experience their significance is all by His Grace alone. To our Guru, "the Master without rival", we can never be too thankful.

His wisdom is supreme. Not a question or doubt, misconceptions or notion, sankalpa or vikalpa, misidentification or attachment, can remain when His wisdom is met. There is nothing like it. There are doubtless sages who realize the identical, blissful Knowledge, but there is nothing similar to that which when realized is sole-existent. In nonduality, there can be no comparison or contrast, for there is not differentiation. This Self-Knowledge is perfect and there is nothing beyond it, for it is that which Knowing and Being are one and the same. If one neither adds to it (appends a limiting notion to it) nor subtracts from it, the perfect fullness shines resplendent. The Maharshi reveals this Self-Knowledge always. In it there is neither duality nor the triads, neither concepts nor anything else. Though the Self is non objective, He nevertheless reveals it in utter clarity. Though, in Truth there are not two such things as path and attainment. He nonetheless reveals the way to abide steadily in that blissful, true Knowledge for all of us and guides His disciples and devotees in a divine, unfailing manner, enabling them to know the unknown Knower of all. With this Knowledge, there is nothing else to know, and the peaceful Bliss that is continuously experienced leaves no other happiness to be desired.

I cannot say when I first met Bhagavan or when the Maharshi's Presence first started to influence the life or when He first "came to me". To say it happened suddenly seems to deny His ever present nature: to say it happened gradually seems to deny the evident fact that He is always present in His entirety. To speak of a sudden event or of gradual growth of that Presence

in this life has no rationale. There were memories from before and a distinct, vivid feeling of familiarity with places, images, words, etc., associated with Sri Ramana, as there must be for ever so many disciples and devotees. Yet to place emphasis on such here would seem to accord some dust of belief in an ongoing jiva, which His Grace and Truth have irrefutably proved to be nonexistent. For us with a life in His Grace and Truth, every moment is profound. Each moment He reveals Himself anew in His entirety, beyond the illusions of time conjured up by the mirage of the mind, and always what is revealed is the ever-same Self. It is neither new nor old, neither reached nor ever lost, but ever the case, with the Self, or Brahman, the Knowledge and our Bhagavan indistinguishably one - utterly indivisible. I can only say that He has always been there. There was a time when that Presence - the perfect fullness of Truth and Grace - was not known. When it revealed itself The one who did not know, his ignorance and his time, being unreal, simply vanished by the illluminative power of that Truth and Grace, of Bhagavan. The joy of the disciple consists in his unimportance and nonexistence, while the sole existence and all-importance of his Guru is his nondual Bliss. Sometimes, one hears a seeker ask if there is a stage when the Guru is no longer necessary; the answer is that a stage is reached when the disciple is no longer necessary.

Hearing a story is captivating for the mind. If the story is endowed with wisdom, such as are the stories told by Vasishta and the episodes related in the Upanishads - and of course the sublime story of our Guru, the Maharshi - the mind is led by the story beyond all stories. It is just as when a decoy deer has been deployed to capture the deer. Any story about a disciple or a devotee serves only to further glorify the wondrous Guru. We do not focus upon the transitory, illusory body of the disciple or devotee, or upon the dreamlike illusions of the events and objects depicted in the story, or upon the unreal personality and individuality of him or her. Rather, we find ourselves revelling in the liberating Presence of the Guru, our Bhagavan, immersed in His sweet Grace, with each story being in some way our own.

Whenever I am asked to give some story that pertains in the least to “my life”, there is the distinct feeling that there is nothing to be said. This is so because, firstly, all the events can be told from ever so many perspectives; secondly, because the events themselves are unreal; and thirdly, as disciples and devotees, our only real story is our dissolution in and merger with Him “like a river when it joins the ocean.” Fourthly, there is truly no one born,

living or dying about whom to say anything - the unreal adventures of a phantom man in the city of the clouds. Moreover, once the Maharshi's story is heard or read, who could care to listen or to read any other? Yet I, myself, am always thrilled to hear any anecdote about anyone touched by His Grace and Knowledge in any manner whatsoever. So, if there is anything said here that can serve the function of reminding a fellow disciple or devotee about the immensity of His Grace and the importance of the Knowledge He reveals, this would have served some useful purpose; but if any emphasis would be placed upon this body or if there would arise any fascination with a supposed individual, such would run contrary to the intention in saying these things, the intention of He at whose request this has been written and the Truth itself. What is presented here are a few descriptions of what has occurred inwardly than any depiction of an outer tale or events, actions, or circumstances. Whatever is declared here is Sri Bhagavan's alone and does not indicate in the least any individual's significance, but only the glory of the timeless Presence of the Maharshi. It is said that not a stone on holy Arunachala was untouched by His feet: I am just one of those stones.

It does not seem possible to determine when illusion (maya) began, with all its confusion and bondage. If an enquiry is made as to its nature, it vanishes and proves beginingless in the sense of never having begun at all. With true Knowledge, it is found to be nonexistent. It never came to be, like the illusory snake where, in fact, there is only a rope. There is no actual happiness or peace in illusion. Delusion spawns desire and fear, anticipation and hollow memories, and attachment and aversion as one yearns for happiness, expecting to obtain from someone or something else what is actually one's own. Life appears confusing and binding, while death appears fearful and inescapable. There seems to be no access to the Truth, and the purpose of life remains unknown or forgotten. Even if some word or symbol pertaining to the Truth is presented, there is no ability, it seems, to retain it, let alone comprehend and abide in its true significance. It is a turbulent ocean, mirage-like in nature, with billows of sorrow and troughs of boredom. It is an empty prison without walls and a dream without beginning and end. Meetings are transient, and separation is forever, and though there may be an agreement of deluded ideas, there is no true love. Like dry leaves before gusts of wind, one is driven by karma as one tries to cling to what cannot possibly last and attempts to avoid the inevitable. One learns and learns as life slips by, but no real wisdom is forthcoming, and one never thinks to look

within. There is the fear of loneliness that could swallow one up, but one never inquires to see just what it is that is there when, consumed, you are all alone. The description of delusion could go on endlessly, as repetitive as the ignorance itself. Self revealed by the Grace of the Guru, the whole of illusion is mere nothingness with no duration. Though illusion is nothing, it seems so powerful and encompassing; though it seems powerful and encompassing, it is really nothing.

The Grace of the Guru pierces illusion's bubble-like dream in inexplicable ways. It is always blissful and liberating. It reveals itself as direct experience and shines as revelation. It manifests as sudden samadhi, transcendent of the body and all thought, with no apparent previous cause or condition. It displays itself as myriad lessons of wisdom, the essence of which is always the Knowledge of oneself. It aligns all the factors of life and also lifts quite beyond them. Though for many all these things happen after seeing some passages of His teaching or being blessed by His darshan through a picture or having seen Him when His body still lived, Sri Bhagavan also manifests His Grace in all these ways prior to one's knowing anything about Him, even His name and only later makes known to the disciple or devotees His name and form, which for us is the name of the Ineffable and the form of the Formless. In His inscrutable, divine guidance, He accomplishes what needs to be accomplished at the perfect time in the perfect way. Thus, in all these ways and more, this Presence manifests. "Unasked, Thou givest." By not erroneously claiming any of these blessings as possessions of the ego, they endure and are not lost to obscuring vasanas. They are identified as being of the Grace of the Maharshi and are not imagined to be the result of fate, of one's own merit, or of the mind's activities or meanderings. They shine due to the boundless power of vivid Reality, which Sri Ramana Himself is. His Presence manifests, yet may not be known at first to be Him in the sense of knowing anything about a Guru or the Self, let alone having any idea of finding and devoting oneself to that Guru or having the ability to abide as that Self. Later, one learns of that holy name, "Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi", and gains that darshan of that most serene, bliss-bestowing gaze. Then, the heart is flooded with joy, and the path that seemed winding and as narrow as the "razor's edge" becomes straight, direct and so wide as to make it impossible to go astray.

The Maharshi revealed the secret of Bliss, the real source of deep, lasting

happiness. He showed the source, the nature and experience of happiness to be one and the same. It is not a worldly or sensory character. Happiness is within. What is within is the Self. "In order to gain that happiness which is the Self ... one should know one's Self." It seems that this is such simple Truth and indeed, it is simpler than any extroverted thought to the contrary, but to fully grasp it and dwell unwaveringly in it is essential. It is foundational to the inquiry into the Self. Hence, He has so clearly enunciated it in the preamble to the sacred set of liberating instructions contained in *Who Am I?*. Once it is truly understood, there is freedom from the world. No longer could anything cause suffering, be it an object, an event, conditions or a person. With His instruction, the tangled knot of desire and aversion, indeed all attachment, was cut asunder in such a manner as to make it impossible to be recreated. The detachment thus yielded is of a luminous freedom and peace, the mind's concerns vanishing like the darkness before the sun. Wherever and whenever we are, Bliss is with us in us and can no more be parted from us than we can be separated from our own existence. The joy of absorption of His teaching and absorption in its profound meaning far surpasses the fulfillment of any desire, even all of them put together. He has revealed Bliss, and with a happy heart, all is at peace.

The entire delusion is said to be the outward-turned mind. The outward-turned mind appears as attachments and misidentifications. The outward tendency has the force of a torrent, but what motivates it, what gives it that force? And how to turn it inward and to turn it inward steadily? Sri Bhagavan revealed the answers in a way that could leave no doubt or difficulty. Indeed, what is unknown to Him, the supreme Rishi, the one who truly knows Brahman for He is Brahman itself? Nothing is unseen by His all-seeing eye. The outwardness is the search for happiness when its abiding place is not known. Further, outwardness is the false belief that the mind's own projections, projected into itself, are real. Finally, outwardness is the wrong notion that there is such a thing as the mind. The Maharshi clearly revealed that since the happiness is the Self, the search for it is really the search for the Self, which is the Reality. Happiness, Reality and the Self are one and the same. When this is known, by consistent meditation on what He reveals even in a moment, outwardness dissolves and the torrent of such tendencies evaporates. It seemed as if the mind went outward, but actually it was only the mind projecting itself into itself, for the whole world is only in the mind and nowhere else. It seemed as if turning inward was like moving

a mountain but He accomplishes the impossible and enables the disciple to find it to be natural.

Turning inward: it is essential, It is the most important thing to be done. By His Grace, it is accomplished. Self-effort is needed. When self-effort meets with Grace, the highest good results. Turning inward, how to go outward is forgotten. Accustomed to detachment, one forgets how to be attached. Immersed in happiness, how to be sad becomes "a lost art", and one cannot do so even in pretence. There is the recollection that once there was suffering, but no actual memory or feeling of suffering itself. Where did the bondage go? I had been tied without a rope. The solidity of the outward turned mind was but imagination. Now, by the Truth and Grace of my Guru, imagination proves causeless and rootless, and the mind returns to its source, like the bird to the boat in a vast ocean, or like a river when it joins the ocean. "Who am I?" becomes known as the only true question, and the yearned for blissful ego-death is here and now.

Bodiless He is, and bodiless He makes us abide. In some mysterious, inexplicable way, His picture reveals this, with its timeless, Dakshinamurthi gaze, just as He explains this with words brimming with compassion again and again to the disciples and the devotees, page after page, day after day. The day the pictures first arrived from Sri Ramanasramam so many years ago was filled with a profound joy. It was the joy of devotion, of faith, of being blessed with the guiding Light, of divine support - in short, the Guru's Presence. There had been no pictures of any kind, spiritual or artistic, anywhere in the place for months. Just blank walls, like a mind that is a clean slate, were there, preparing as it were for His arrival. They arrived from His holy ashram on the other side of the world, beckoning me to leave the world altogether. The whole place felt sanctified thereby. The walls and the altar seemed to support the pictures, but really it was Sri Bhagavan who was supporting them and all else as well.

If one is going to see anything at all, it should be the divine face of the Maharshi. Silent, speaks all that need be said to the heart. Like His Teaching, His picture is of perpetual fascination. When I first started to read a book containing His sacred utterances, I had proceeded only about two or three pages before I realized that though, in one sense, I had understood, I had not truly understood. So, I started from the beginning again. This happened

several times. Eventually, I realized it was alright to proceed further into the book, but the lesson had been learned. This was not mere inspirational reading, even of a scripture declaring ultimate Truth. This was a means of darshan, and if I could really, experientially comprehend even a phrase of it, the Truth would be revealed and all that is to be known would be known. The perpetual fascination still remains. It will always. Ever new, ever the same are His Wisdom and His timeless Presence.

You are not the body. "How could a transitory, objective, sporadically appearing inert form experienced only in the waking state of mind by dependence on the senses, prana, mind, and ego be my real, continuous, nonobjective existence, which is evident without recourse to anything else and is always present regardless of the states of the body and mind"? And how could that which was already being experienced have remained as if unknown or unrecognized? In delusion, the Real is as if unreal or unknown, and the unreal seems as if real. But Bhagavan, the divine Guru, reveals Himself, and the unreal vanishes as unreal, and thus the Reality remains unobscured.

The body was afflicted by asthma. At night, I did not know if the next breath would come. The medicines did not work, and the side effects of those medicines available at that time could be as lethal as the disease itself. It was all so obvious that life is short and fleeting, and that death comes quickly and unexpectedly. It was doubtful that the bodily life would survive to adulthood, and the physicians yielded to their despair. At the time, it seemed as if I was left with a choice. On the one hand, I could pursue a search for some kind of cure that would hopefully be found somewhere. If a cure was found, life might be extended so that spiritual practice could continue. If the attempt failed, the remaining moments would have been wasted, the life lived in vain, and the only vow I took, the only one Bhagavan demanded - the vow for Liberation (Moksha) - would be left unfulfilled. On the other hand, I could stay put and pursue spiritual practice as He revealed it with all the energy I could muster and adhere to the Truth of the bodiless Self, with full conviction and perseverance, come what may, regardless of the risk. I felt inside myself, "If I do not fully awaken to the Truth, I will live and die in an unreal dream. If I practice right through the last breath, it will all be worth it: and if the Truth is realized even at the last moment, the Liberation from samsara (birth and death) will be for all eternity."

I placed myself in His hands. When the heart's consecration is made, Grace which is always present, reveals itself wondrously. The intensity yielded the yearned for freedom, and miraculously His Grace made known to me a complete cure for the supposedly incurable disease. He is the immaculately perfect One, and the all-accomplishing One.

Birth, growth, death, pleasure and pains, actions and their results, environments and appearances - all of it is just for the body. The Truth revealed by the Maharshi cuts the knot that seems to tie our true Being with a bodily form. What a relief! What freedom! All the concerns centered around the body had been to no purpose and had been groundless. Illness and pain were no more afflictions. The inert body can move all day, yet stillness prevails and I never do anything. And the fear of death was gone by His immortality revealing Truth and His Bliss bestowing Grace.

The ego, being a vacuous illusion, does not stand alone, but seems to append to itself various concepts, especially in the form of characteristics of a personality. So much of that is associated with the misidentification with the body. With the dissolution of that misidentification, the personality also dissolves. Moreover, the Presence of the Guru brings everything to a cessation. Whether it be before His couch or samadhi, gazing at His lustrous picture, opening a book containing His nectarean instructions, or simply meditating upon His Presence in the heart, we find that the ego and its characteristics and concerns stop dead there and then. The ego falls prostrate, as it were, and cannot continue another step. In that Presence, no attachment can survive, nor can any idea or opinion remain. Nor can any idea of "a world" continue. Nor can past thoughts be recalled, nor future ones come, nor the present ones remain. Nothing can withstand that flood tide of Grace, nor can the ego-mind reach its limit. Like Brahma and Vishnu encountering the infinite linga of the Light of Siva, the mind's creating and sustaining end, and the egoless, infinite Consciousness, self-luminous, reveals itself. The "ability" to be this or that is lost, and the ego lies exposed in its vacuity. How false were all the delusions, fears, and anticipation! They wither and perish by just the slightest touch, in whatever manner, of Sri Bhagavan's Presence.

He liberates one from the corpse of the body, and He liberates one from the phantom of the mind. Having imagined a mind, it seemed as if I was in it, just as it had falsely seemed as if the Self was in a body and in a world

when, in Truth, the Self was not in a world or in a body at all. How utterly false proved the mind's fetters and the notion of being in a mind or even being endowed with a mind. Only one who abides beyond the mind can lift one entirely beyond the mind to the Reality of infinite Consciousness. This the Guru mercifully does for the disciple. Only abidance transcendent of the mind can be perpetual meditation and enduring peace. Thought is changeful, moving and transitory, and lasting peace and undisturbed meditation cannot be found as such. The immovable and immutable is Peace itself. When meditation does not depend upon bodily posture, it endures, and when it does not depend on thought, it becomes perpetual and continuous.

He revealed thought's utter insignificance and that the real Self is all-important. He revealed thought's transiency and that of Something else within which does not rise and subside. He revealed the objective nature of all thoughts (every thought has a form), and the existence of That which is formless and nonobjective. Only the nonobjective is who we are; we cannot be a thought of which we are aware. He revealed the true significance of what Sri Sankara and other sages had referred to as the Witness.

The Witness: it is not a function. It is not an activity. It is not something we do at one time and not at another. It is not an observing process. Because of His abidance as the Self, the Maharshi effortlessly elucidates with the utmost clarity that about which the minds of others might merely conjecture: The Maharshi has revealed the significance of "the Witness" as well as every other description of the Self or the Absolute. Indeed, He is That about which the scriptures speak, and He is the true, inner "translator" within us all who renders the teachings of wisdom and devotion into actual experience. The Witness: it is just Consciousness. It is innately free of thoughts. It is what we are. What the "I" is, is only formless Consciousness. In the delusion of assuming a reality or existence for thought and state of mind, I asked to know this Consciousness in relation to the mind. He revealed it as the Witness, free of the notions of "I" and "this". The only bondage was conceiving the knower to the known. Thoughts appear and disappear: the Witness remains unchanged. States of mind come and go: that Consciousness remains unaffected. All the world appears before it and then dissolves: the uncreated and imperishable Consciousness abides as the silent Witness. It is not individualized, being the Witness of all, and is gunatita. Who else but Sri Bhagavan, the ever gracious and ever victorious Guru, could lift us out of

the grip of the delusive mind with its quicksand-like states and its nonsensical thoughts? Who else but Sri Ramana could show us how to cease imagining corners in the infinite space of pure Consciousness?

Previously, I had hallucinated myself to be in a mind, my mind in a body, and my body in a world. By His clear instruction and world-and-mind-dissolving Grace, I came to experientially know that the world, including the body, is in the sensory experience, the sensory experience is entirely in the mind and the mind is but "I" in different guises or forms. But, who am I?

The world is only an unreal dream. The "outer" is conceived only in the mind, just as "inner" and "outer" are apparently experienced, but only imagined, in a dream. But, for whom is this dream? It is easy to be detached from an unreal dream that is in no way the source of happiness, but who is detached? Who is bound, and who desires Liberation? Do not cease the desire for Liberation, but simply find out who it is that wants this Liberation or who it is that is supposedly bound: thus you can realize the Truth and be liberated. It is in this manner that Sri Bhagavan has given His Liberating instruction, turning out minds to the source, not allowing them to stray into their own imaginings, and uprooting the very basis of illusion.

Thought ceased. Then it resumed. Again it ceased. And again it resumed. By intense concentration with, and empowered by, the inquiry in meditation, thought could cease. Not just a narrative "voice" dealing with ideas, emotions (which are more ideas) activities, etc., but all thoughts would cease, inclusive of all thought constituting perception and any other kind of thought. But, He, the enlightened and all-knowing One, had emphatically declared that what appeared would also disappear. So, if a thought-filled state appeared, it would also disappear. If a thoughtless state appeared it would also disappear. He revealed that that which appears and disappears is unreal. It is unreal not only before it appears and after it disappears, but also for the unreal time during which it seems to be. How can I extend and make permanent this state without thought? That was the idea then. But the Maharshi is always there for the rescue and supplies all the necessary Light and much more. He Himself makes clear (for the understanding of the disciples and devotees, for the teaching itself is always direct and perfectly clear) His own instruction to ease the obtuseness of His disciple such is His boundless compassion. "Free from thought" had a much more profound

meaning, one that is unfading and of the Reality. Awakening to it is abidance free from false definition, modification and misidentification. Awakening to it is accompanied by ego-death, is the unveiling of the mystery of "no-creation", in which the first thought has not yet occurred. Awakening to it is the entrance into infinite, undifferentiated, space-like Consciousness.

By Grace one is led to peace. Fearlessness itself, Sri Bhagavan, makes one not to fear. Even the fear of death is destroyed. He is the destroyer of destruction, the death of death itself. How much more so is it with lesser fears, all of which are but the notion of the loss of existence and happiness, which are intrinsically one. Because the Self is not known, birth and death appear. If the Self is known, from that moment onward birth and death are gone and the ever unborn, undying Self remains. Because the Self is not realized as it is, Yama (death) appears, plaguing the inhabitants of all the dreams. Having been plagued for ages time and again, in a palace of learning with a thousand rooms I traced Yama out by following his muddy tracks. In the innermost compartments, there were three chambers. Entering the outermost one, it was found to be completely empty. Entering the second, it was also found to be entirely empty. In the innermost he appeared, as death is concomitant with the ego. He rushed forward, as Yama cuts down all in no time without sparing any. Only the grace of the Guru can sustain or help one of them. His is strength unfailing: and from whom else or from where else can one draw real courage? If one has not embraced the Guru with all his being and if the guru has not shown the way, how is one to truly face life or death? There is no hope in vain struggle as that is the product of dualism. By His wisdom I knew to hold nothing as myself and to embrace, even death, but when that is the approach Yama is powerless and vaporous. Nothing happened. Yama and the fear of death vanished, never to return. I had not done anything. The Lord of all, Guru Ramana, is the one who brings about that which is absolutely necessary and awakens the disciples from this transitory dream of transiency. "Those who have great fear of death seek refuge at the feet of the Supreme Lord who is without birth and death, in order to overcome their fear. They then die to themselves along with their adjuncts (sense of 'I' and 'mine'). Will those who are (have realized themselves to be) deathless entertain again the thought of death?"

The Maharshi gives instruction about the three states to free us from all that appears in them and to show us that the Self that we are is beyond all the

states of mind. Following his instruction, we watch the dream state dissolve, the interim, and the slow creation of what becomes a waking state. Following His instructions, we observe the disappearance of the waking state and the formation of the dream. By applying His instruction, we find ourselves free of both states and all that is conjured up within them. Most importantly, that which is continuous, the one thing that does not change when the states of mind change, becomes evident. Not only does it pass through all the states without itself ever undergoing any change, but actually all the states appear and revolve within it. What is that? IT is perpetual Existence. What is that? It is perpetual Consciousness. Like this was the meditation.

Who am I? If only the answer to this is known, there is then nothing more to be known or attained. He said, "The enquirer himself is the answer and there can be no other answer." Who am I? At one point, it seemed the method to quell all other notions, and, indeed, it is ideal for that purpose. Yet, it is still more. It is for the revelation of unobscured Being.

The utter absence of individuality, of the ego, is essential. "The ignorance is identical with the 'I' thought. Seek the source and it will vanish." He proclaimed. "I want to be free of individuality. I may be free of its appendages in the form of various characteristics, etc. but the "I" itself must disappear. How is the elimination of the individual "I" to be brought about?" Like that was the intention and meditation. We should never think that Sri Ramana leaves us to find the answers for ourselves, though that may be said to instruct a person who assumes the Guru will give Self- Realization as if handing over an object. He is always there with the answer, with the ocean of His Grace and the profusion of His Wisdom. We have only to ask the deep questions, and that too, not merely verbally, but at the same deep level that we wish to experience bliss and peace. His instruction, known to us all "Can 'I' eliminate itself?" "Find out if the ego does exist", reveals the answer to be closer than I thought.

Myriad lessons about the single sole-existent Reality His Grace and Teaching reveal. He has spoken of Dattatreya, who is associated with the *Avadhuta Gita, Tripura Rahasya* and pure Advaita. It is said that this great sage of antiquity had twenty-four Gurus. Or it may be said that he had one Guru who appeared in all those ways. Sri Bhagavan, who is Siva Himself, Brahman itself, of an inconceivable nature, is all those Gurus or the One

who appears in countless ways. He instructs us by His limitless compassion and love, which humbles us, placing us in awe, dissolving us into nothing so that He alone remains. He instructs us with His expressed Teaching, flawless and all illuminating. His words are always direct, with nothing concealed or veiled whatsoever. He instructs through the medium of the entire universe, and He instructs by inner revelation and experience. He instructs by the Silence of Reality itself.

The Maharshi's blissful Wisdom is all-comprehensive, making known the nature of everything from the smallest sensation or thought to all kinds of samadhi. No shadow of doubt or confusion can withstand the radiance of the sun of Bhagavan, more dazzling than a thousand suns and consuming the universe in His splendour. Though questions and ideas about samadhi arise for minds not in samadhi, there is no possibility of such notions in samadhi itself. In samadhi, there is no question of effort or its absence, and indeed samadhi can occur with or without preceding effort. Nirvikalpa Samadhi had occurred at the commencement of sadhana, just as the Self is already fully present before any of us began our spiritual practice. Some would say that the samadhi was due to hidden samskaras from the past. I would rather say it was due to Grace, for there was nothing else to account for it. Later, with recurring experiences, I would examine to see what brought them about and who brought samadhi to an end. What takes one up and what brings one down? It helped to eliminate vasanas - misidentifications and attachments. Yet, the Maharshi's revelation of the Truth eliminated the entire field. "Who is the knower?" The questions about samadhi themselves were difficult to raise for one could not expect to acquire an accurate answer in any less expansive or more formed state of mind and in samadhi itself the questions would not arise. But Bhagavan is turiyatita and transcends all. He showed that what is experienced in essence in samadhi does not come and go: the boundaries constituting the before the beginning and the after-the-end appear and disappear, for they are composed only of illusions. "Who goes up or down?" "Who enters into or merges with what?" "Who realizes what?" Oh, the way He cuts every knot and vanquishes every illusion is beyond compare!

The glories of Sri Bhagavan are endless. Approach Him assuming He has any of the characteristics of a man, and He proves to be transcendent of them all. If you approach as a knower of the Truth, He reveals Himself to be far vaster, as the Truth, Brahman itself. Then approach Him as the

Supreme Lord, as Siva - as the ineffable, supreme Brahman itself - and He reveals Himself, in all His vast transcendent nature, to be present moment by moment, even in the most ordinary circumstances. The anecdotes preserved by those blessed devotees and disciples who witnessed them display this again and again, and we find the same to be true now. His Grace and Wisdom and His Silent Presence with us all the time. "To one who destroyed himself (his ego) and is awake to his nature as bliss, what remains to be accomplished? He does not see anything (as being) other than himself. Who can comprehend his state?"

Bhagavan is so very thorough. He destroys the root of ignorance, burns up all the branches of illusion like fire when it contacts straw, and reveals the sole Reality in one stroke. He is none other than Dakshinamurti, revealing the one undifferentiated, unbroken, expanse of Silence the natural state of the egoless Self. He provides the support of Grace and the Light of Wisdom. He lays out the direct path - who am I? - and is the ultimate encouragement while He eliminates the doubt of "Can I realize the Self?" in a way, nondual that makes it impossible for it to rise again. "Are there two selves, one to realize the other?" His familiar instruction rings in our ears, blowing dualism's dust from our mind as His silent Presence inundates our hearts. He arranges everything. We have only to adhere to Him completely, practise His Teaching without interruption, and follow His instructions exactly.

Sri Bhagavan has said, "Vichara is the process and the goal also. 'I Am' is the goal and final Reality. To hold to it with effort is vichara. When spontaneous and natural, it is Realization." He declared, "The Self, conscious Being of 'I less ness' is the That which is one's true State realized by destroying the ego through Self-inquiry."

Who am I? I could see that the world and the body - all composed of the elements - are not the true Self, do not constitute an ego-self, and are not real. I could see that the senses are not the Self, do no constitute an ego-self, and is not real. I saw that the prana, in all its permutations is not the Self, does not constitute an ego-self, and is not real. I saw the mind - all thoughts - is not the Self, does not constitute an ego-self and is not real. The notion "I" is not the Self, does not refer to any actually existent ego entity, and is itself unreal. "I" does not come from the real Self, does not come from "anything else" (which is imagined only after the "I" is assumed), and is not

self-generated. Thus was the experience, without these words or ideas. Who now saw? Who did not see before? "Who is the seer? When I sought within, I watched the disappearance of the seer and what survived him. No thought of 'I saw' arose: How then could the thought 'I did not see' arise?..." He can declare even that which is unutterable, though he is ever Silent.

"The Self is only Being - not being this or that. It is simple Being. BE, and there is the end of ignorance." Truly seeing and meditating even once upon this much of Sri Bhagavan's revelation of Reality - realizing its meaning, supremely profound, the "I" does not survive. It never makes it even to the last sentence. His Wisdom, His Grace, His Presence is all the Reality itself. That is the Self. The Self alone is: there is no other. There is, thus no ignorance and no separate state of Knowledge, no bound state and no separate state of Liberation. The natural state of nonobjective, uncreated Being has no "other", no alternative. There is no realizer, no "I", and no tale to be told of an "I". There has been no birth, there will be no death. There are no unrealized beings or realized beings: there is only Being. There is no creation. Not a single, objective thing has ever come to be. Being which is itself limitless Consciousness and Bliss, alone is. It is unbroken Silence.

The Guru remains, the disciple disappeared. The Real, which ever is, abides. The unreal, which never is, is said to have gone away. With a heart ever happy and at peace, all events are of no consequence and all opinions are empty echoes. Appearance and disappearance are equal. The wordless, worldless, blissful knowledge is always, and every day is an utsava, celebration, of Him, the one for whom we have eternal gratitude. There is an indescribable joy in the meeting with any of His disciples and devotees, for He is the indweller of them all, and all are one in Him, That itself.

In His great cosmic display of Grace - Nataraja's dance - Sri Bhagavan makes Himself known in ever so many ways according to His own time. It is beyond intellectual analysis. Our illusory bodies, unreal corpses in themselves, are to be regarded just as mere instruments in His hands, so that His truth and Grace should be known - though he does not require us in order that He make Himself known. Whatever is said, He speaks. I have nothing to say myself. To attempt to posses any experience or wisdom, bliss or freedom is to lose it. Someone may ask a question. The answer is self-evident. There is no one to be a "teacher" or anything else. Moreover, all the trunks of the

banyan are one banyan and have no individual existence.

Over the years, this body has been temporarily saved from death and similar things that would have otherwise been considered calamities - disease, accidents, violence, etc. At one time, these would have been conceived as harrowing adventures. The Maharshi's Grace and Truth, though, have not only spared this life, albeit temporarily, but have completely and unfailingly removed any possible fear or suffering. Absorbed in That, there is no second, no fear, and no death. Blissful immortality is a plain and simple fact. Just Being: it is the natural state, the Innate, and that is all.

All of the above is, perhaps, more a thin patchwork, a collection of comments, not entirely in chronological order, of an inner life than a recollection of outer events, for the Grace and Truth of the Maharshi are revealed in a manner transcendent of all phenomena. Whatever little is of worth here to one who reads this, it is all of the Maharshi. It can be summed up simply as:

Everything that Sri Bhagavan has said about practice and Self-Realization is true. What He has proclaimed to be real is alone real. It is all true, completely true. There is no doubt of this. Timeless Presence. Eternal Truth.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

Salutation to the feet of the Guru Sri Dakshinamurthi, who sees within himself the entire universe, which resembles the image of a city in a mirror, which appears to be outside him just as objects seen in a dream are outside the dreamer, but which merges into himself in the state of Realisation - for then he sees the Self alone, just as the awakened dreamer sees himself alone and not the objects he dreamt.

Dakshinamurthi Stotra

THE LIGHT IS SHINING

Mouni Sadhu

Maharshi has left this world. But those who have understood his mission, his message, and his teachings have not remained orphans. He still lives in their hearts and his influence will increase as they advance towards Truth. They do not mourn the departure of the beloved Master and Friend. The same Light is still shining on his pupils scattered all over the world, for it is also the very core of their own being.

When many years ago one of his pupils said that he wanted to remain at any cost in the Ashram, to be always in the physical vicinity of "Bhagavan", Maharshi answered: " *The Spiritual Being dwelling in you is the Real Bhagavan, That is what you have to realize .*"

Can there be any loftier spiritual conception? In discovering our own Real Self we discover at the same time our beloved master. And there is no other way. This Self is *all*, and nothing exists beyond and apart from *It*. So there is no use searching for anything else but the Self, all else is illusion.

In a quiet peaceful corner of India in the last resting-place of the Sage of Arunachala, every day the remaining disciples and devotees of the Master are gathering. They are singing the same hymns which were sung in the Temple Hall during his lifetime. Silence reigns in its crystalline purity all round and in the hearts of those who are privileged to have witnessed Maharshi's mission. My Indian friends call the present state of Maharshi *"Mahasamadhi"* which can be translated as "the great union" or "the great and final contemplation", which expresses at least in part the beautiful Sanskrit term.

In spite of the fact that a dense and heavy darkness still envelops Mankind in this critical stage of its evolution, it is an undeniable fact that real Spiritual Beauty and Greatness irresistibly attract many of us and this is the best proof of the future possibilities hidden in all human beings. It was always so. It will always be so.

The Great Teachers who came down here to shed Light on the path of Humanity have always had round them a group to be a fertile soil into which the blessed seeds of True Wisdom fell, not to be dried up but to germinate.

The phenomenon of Maharshi is one proof more that the ways of Providence are adapted to the stages of evolution reached by mankind in every era. Now, when the minds of the dwellers on our planet have become somewhat more developed as compared with those of past ages, at least so far as the mass of Humanity is concerned - I do not speak of special individuals - spiritual teaching had to be given in an adequate form.

When many religions and sects were quarrelling with each other, there was a need for a presentation of Truth which would transcend all the enclosing walls of particular faiths. This was given by Maharshi. His teachings can be accepted by anyone sincerely seeking God and Truth independently of the religion in which he has been reared. There is moreover the fact that in the Light of Maharshi's teachings, the truths contained in the Sacred Scriptures of every religion can be easily understood and their seeming contradictions cease to exist for seekers of Truth

Self-knowledge, according to the experimental methods of the Great Indian Rishi leads us to a religious synthesis. We see that the Buddha, the Christ and minor or rather less known, Messengers all speak about the same Reality, only the outward way of presenting it may vary in accordance with the needs of the epoch and the possibilities of human understanding. All fanaticism and intolerance which are such great obstacles in our search for God are then dropped.

It is from these two plagues that political and social fanaticisms and despotisms are born and their devastating effects are seen in our own times.

Maharshi touches the true cause of all the crimes and misfortunes afflicting Humanity. He says clearly: *"All sins and wickednesses are born from the false human notion that causes people to identify themselves with their bodies, there is no sin in which the motive of selfishness and this identification with the body cannot be discovered.*

It is obvious that all evil can be traced to this cause. Similarly the opposite assertion: *" I am not this body, I am the eternal spirit dwelling temporarily in this vehicle of flesh "* radically uproots all evil motives.

That is the essence of Maharshi's message, the essence of the teachings of *one of the last great rishis of India*, so far as I was able to understand it.

The Silence through Vichara will stop your restless mind, and the Real will manifest itself. Do not try to hasten the process. Perhaps this was written for you, not for the outer "you" but the real *You*.

For *You* and I are one.

Often questions arise which may be anticipated. Let us answer some of them.

Is the Path shown by one of the last Great Rishis appropriate for you? When reading or listening to the teachings and lives of Spiritual Geniuses whom we call Saints and Sages, your heart melts and you feel that the invisible spiritual current draws you in, then know that it may be a call for you. Let us not extinguish those delicate moments of the spiritual flame which is hidden deep below the layers of our personality. When in such moments everything in you melts into a mighty desire to step after HIM, after this still unknown, but already beloved Master, then in fact HE is calling you. It is the only way HE can call-from within your being, not from without. If you see, as in the brightness of a lightning the whole unreality of the visible world, including your temporary, limited form, called till now you, then prepare yourself for the Great Pilgrimage. Forget then the Past and the Future, your petty aims of the transient physical existence; only the eternal unchanging, glorious Present has henceforth to concern you.

Everything apart from IT is your false self - your vampire-like ego, your Maya - the realm of the unreal. If an irresistible desire to enter on the Path does not arise in you, if you cannot realise what this Path is really about, then it is clear the time is not yet ripe for you. The ordinary ways of life are more appropriate. To be honest, good, full of sympathy is a necessary step towards the Direct Path which will reveal itself in due course.

I do not wish to conceal difficulties which will surely be encountered on the Path. Therefore you should know that to create evil by thoughts, deeds or feelings when once on the Path will lead to danger and catastrophe. So said the Lord Buddha: *"cease to do evil; learn to do good; purify your own heart"*.

Those are the qualities which develop in the disciple when he really engages in the Vichara. The Vichara itself creates these virtues. That is logical. When you cease to recognise your ego, where will be the motive for

doing evil? When the ego disappears, all evil goes with it.

The fulfillment of the above three commandments produces a Saint. And Saintship is the first real step to Liberation or Self-Realization. Do not doubt that statement. There are more Saints about at the present time than many people suppose. And they do not all wear monk's robes and shaven heads. They may have the appearance of average men. A Saint can only be recognised if he chooses to reveal himself. And his ways of life apparently do not differ much from that of others. Only an intimate contact with him will reveal his saintship.

A wise yogi once said: *"If a flower has honey the bee will find it. It is not the flower which seeks the bee"*. So it will be with your entry on the Path and discipleship of a Master. As the bee finds the flower, so you will find HIM. Sri Ramana Maharshi said to his intimate disciples:

"There is no alternative for you, but to accept the world as unreal, if you are seeking truth and truth alone. The simple reason being that unless you give up the idea of the world being real, your mind will always be seeking it. If you take the illusion to be real, then you will never know the real itself, although it is the real alone that exists".

This saying is of great importance to the seeker. How does a disciple realize that condition? It comes gradually, but irresistibly, as your Vichara proceeds. Practically, you feel as if you were separated from your visible and physical form. Walking, speaking and performing different activities you begin to feel that you are beyond and above the acting form. It is a wonderful feeling of freedom and bliss. No doubts or fears exist. These moments in the beginning are rare, it is true, but in the course of progress they come more and more frequently. These are the first rays of the Light of your true Self, which is happiness itself.

Years ago, when meditating about my Master, I conceived Him to be a Lord of Bliss. And when I saw Him, I gave myself to Him for ever. From that time on the world had no more appeal. I lost my little self reflected in the conventional life.

Scriptures say: *"Naked must man stand before the most high"*. Everywhere we find guiding posts on the Path. By giving up everything we find

all. The paradox is realised, the mystical Truth is proved.

If we are unhappy it is our own error. Therefore do not believe that there are circumstances or conditions which are responsible for the darkness in us. This is the ego-mind which begets this life. For all limitations do not concern the real You.

It is difficult at first to realize our separateness from the visible form, in the state of sleep. For innumerable ages of existence in separate forms, we acquired the habit of merging our consciousness in darkness when asleep. But as the Vichara proceeds it will enlighten even this bastion of darkness in due course.

When you dive into the Sea, you take off your clothes beforehand. When you dive into the Self, in Samadhi you must put aside your outer-self: the thoughts and emotions must be discarded, at least temporarily, before the Samadhi can be experienced. Many books could be written about these experiences, but they would be of little use without the practice of Vichara. And then everything comes of its own accord. As Maharshi says: *"Knowing the self by means of thc vichara you will find your master within yourself"*.

Now it may be clear why disciples of the Master are always conscious of His presence. Every devoted seeker will find Him in his own heart, though he has not seen Him in his physical form. And this invisible Presence is as potent as was his Physical one.

Nevertheless there is a strange power and inspiration in the pictures of Maharshi. Were it not so he never would have permitted them to be made.

May the Grace of the Great Being to whom this Souvenir is dedicated, enlighten our endeavours.

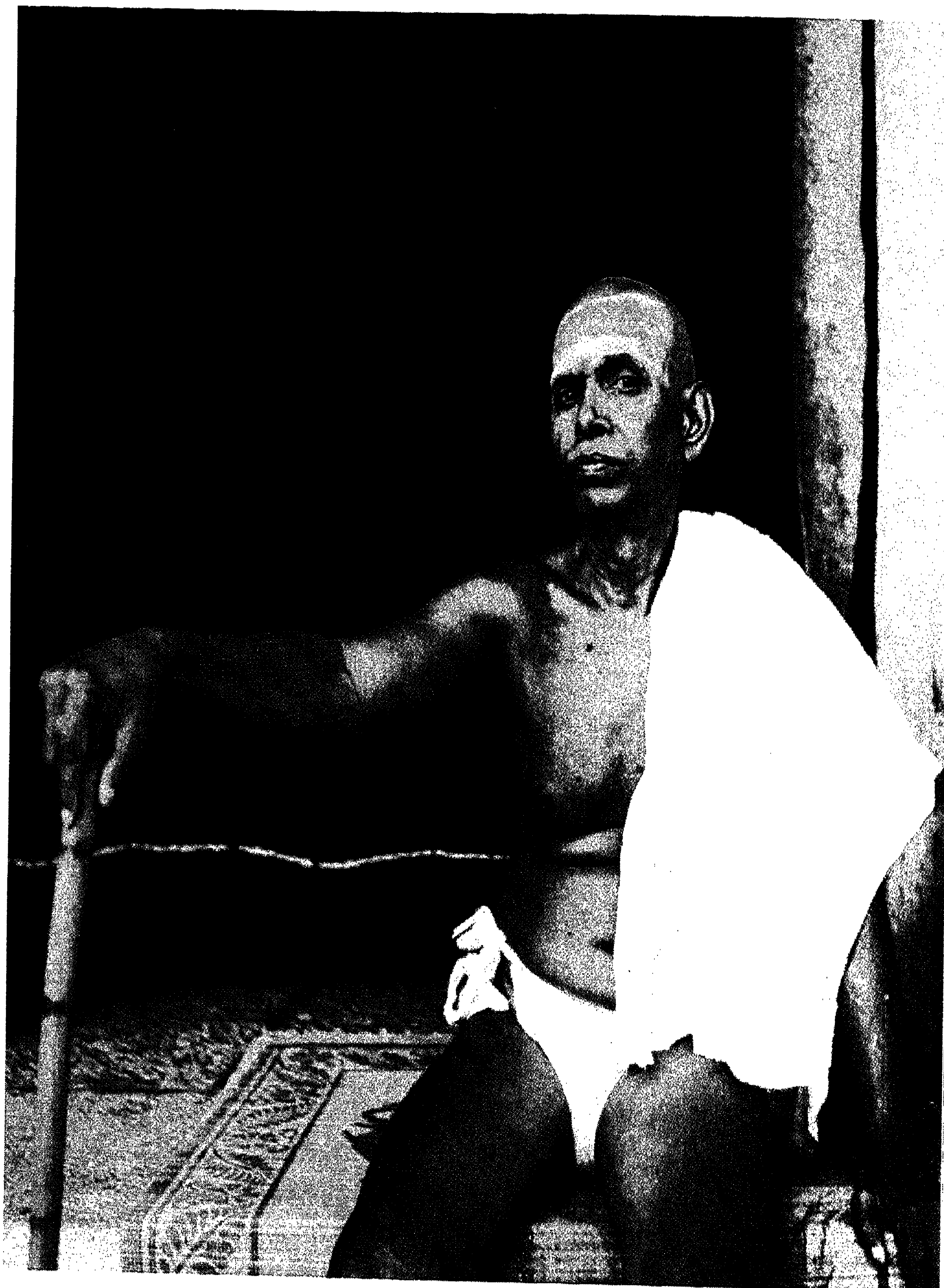
(Excerpts from the author's book 'In Days of Great Peace')

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–



With Pranams from: Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore



With Pranams from: Murugappa Chettiar Trust

AS IT IS

Ramaswami Pillai

We must understand that God, the higher power, As It Is, has given us health, wealth, intelligence and all that we need to lead a happy and helpful life in this world. He also guides us now and then externally (through perception by senses) and also inwardly till we attain our goal of realisation of the Self. Such being the case, as it is, it is the Truth. We out of our ignorance and inveterate ego do not make proper use of our opportunities and rare gifts such as – our intelligence, mind, senses and the physical body but abuse them and hence get into all sorts of troubles. In misery, we realise our deplorable plight and then do what is in our capacity to mend matters and redeem ourselves before it is too late. God helps those who help themselves and if we are not going to help ourselves in time, God cannot be blamed. We shall only have ourselves to blame. May Bhagavan Sri Ramana help us and guide us in the right path.

Think of God

Though by the grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramana we recognize a higher power, yet we do not think of Him in all earnestness, love and sincerity. To think of Him in all earnestness, love and sincerity is to contact Him really. To be in communion with Him incessantly and in unbroken continuity is to be blessed by His omniscient omnipresent and omnipotent Grace. For what we call Grace is only His love for us. We cannot but ever be grateful for all the blessings He showers on us. When we really love Him with all our heart and strength, in all earnestness and sincerity the glorious much-yearned-for alchemy of being one with Him in identity takes place. This is Self-realisation, the goal.

The Path of Self-Enquiry

The most effective way to know God — Arunachala – is not to think at all but to see, introspect and to concentrate the attention of the mind inward to find the source of the I or the ego, the thinker. This process, method and technique of Self-enquiry , "Who am I?" may appear very difficult to start with, even impossible and baffling. However, when once begun with patience and perseverance, by the grace and blessings of Sri Bhagavan, one may (will)

find to one's greatest surprise that no other path is easier than this. Bhagavan himself has said as much in His song of Assurance in Atma Vidya. It begins with: "Self knowledge is an easy thing, the easiest thing there is:"

The I

The so called 'I', the ego whether it is simply a thought or the first thought as Sri Bhagavan has aptly put it, or mere body-consciousness ('I am the body') which it really is, does not matter much; what is important for us is to understand its meaning,and the reality behind it, the source and origin of its appearance. It was not present in deep sleep, yet where could it have been then? It must have been somewhere, somehow to come out again in the waking state to continue its activities from where it left off before going to sleep. It is a mystery. According to Sri Bhagavan, the ego appears immediately and directly from the Self as a result of the combination of Chit or the Spirit, and Jada or the body. It may be compared to the red colour made by the mixture of yellow turmeric with white lime, or to the light which is produced in the bulb by the current and the wire. By Sri Bhagavan's unique method of Self-enquiry the pseudo-self or the ego vanishes and the Self shines in all its resplendent and effulgent glory. This is called Self-realisation.

The Fully Awakened State of Turiya - The Goal of Life

As a matter of fact there is no such thing as an ego to be destroyed, defeated, subdued and conquered. The only reality is the absolute transcendental state of Turiya (the Fourth) or the Supreme Self in which the other three states of Jagrat or waking, Swapna or dreaming and Sushupti or sleeping, are utterly absent and not even remembered as dreams or shadows. For there is no ego or mind (both meaning the same) in the Turiya (transcendental) state. The most wonderful discovery of discoveries is that by Sri Bhagavan's method of self-enquiry "Who am I?" it will get established beyond all possible of doubts that the so-called ego is nothing but a myth and a mirage and a shadow of shadows.

The State After Realisation

The state after Realisation is not new. It is the same as that before Realisation, except that we were not aware of it. After realising our real nature 'As it Is' we are in an infinitely better and more advantageous position

to lead a pure and peaceful life, simple and blessed in every way and every sense. We see things as they really are, one united undivided whole, not separate as individuals as they appeared before. It is as though some thing that was screening our inner mental vision has suddenly fallen, and this has made us fully awakened. Since we now see things as they really are, there arises no doubt, or any problem about anything on any account, material or metaphysical, and we are in a position to deal with any question or situation spontaneously as it arises in our life.

The Illustration of the Snake and the Rope

Let us take the illustration of the snake and the rope, the rajju sarpa nyaya as it is called. Before we became aware that the so-called snake was only a rope, we took it for a real snake and the question whether it was a snake or not did not arise. When by some chance, accident or otherwise we came to discover that after all it is only a rope, the truth gets revealed and the matter ends. Similarly, when we realise that it is only the absolute Brahman that appears as the manifold world through its mysterious and marvellous Mayasakti, the mystery of the appearance and reality of the world and Brahman is solved. Now there is neither the world, the lower self, nor the higher self as such. There is only one universal, undivided, self- existing, self-contained and self-effulgent Self, transcending all dualities and multiplicities, pure awareness and absolute consciousness 'As it Is'.

(From the Archives of Sri Ramanasramam)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

The ancient sages say that silent
Samadhi, the ultimate goal of jnana,
Is the wholly ego-less state.
Till you attain the silent stillness
Of being That, your aim should be
Destruction of the ego.

Garland of Guru's Sayings Ver. 895

SEEK THE SELF

Susunaga Weeraperuma

Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) is rightly regarded as one of the greatest saints and profoundest religious philosophers of our time. His exemplary life is a constant source of inspiration not only to those wishing to lead their lives in a righteous manner but also to persons who are keen on discovering the Self, which may be described as that changeless Divinity which inherently resides in one and all.

It is indeed possible to climb the very summit of the mountain of spirituality with the guidance and assistance of a liberated soul. There is overwhelming evidence to prove that Ramana was directly responsible for the liberation of several blessed devotees, who were thereby extricated from their painful cycle of births and deaths.

Ramana was never an itinerant preacher. But from the far corners of the globe devotees flocked to see and hear him. It was mostly by silence that Ramana taught his numerous visitors. Often he non-verbally communicated his answers to questions. When he spoke, his lucid explanations were to the point, brief and sometimes aphoristic. People asked Ramana many questions with subjects as diverse as God and black magic. Regardless of whether these questioners were serious or superficial, he tried to kindle in them an eagerness to seek the Self. Always concerned about the quest for the Supreme, he would directly or indirectly indicate that the only question worth asking is 'Who am I?' One should address oneself to it. We must also meditate on maxims such as 'I am not this body' and 'I am the Self'. By assiduously practicing these sadhanas, one manages to dissolve the restrictive self and its attendant problems and thereby discover the eternal Self. One is the Self and nothing but the Self: all else is fiction.

The following excerpt from Ramana's booklet entitled *Who Am I?* describes the method of finding the Self: "Of all the thoughts that arise in the mind, the 'I' thought is the first. It is only after the rise of this that the other thoughts arise... The thought 'Who am I?' will destroy all other thoughts, and, like the stick used for stirring the burning pyre, it will itself in the end get destroyed. Then, there will arise Self-realization ... When other thoughts arise, one should not pursue them, but should enquire : 'To whom did they

arise?' It does not matter how many thoughts arise. As each thought arises, one should enquire with diligence, 'To whom has this thought arisen?' The answer that would emerge would be 'To me'. Thereupon if one inquires 'Who am I?', the mind will go back to its source; and the thought that arose will become quiescent. With repeated practice in this manner, the mind will develop the skill to stay in its source."

Someone posed an interesting question : "It is stated in the scriptures that the Self will reveal itself only to one whom it chooses. Then what is the use of our effort?" Ramana replied : "The Self will draw unto itself an aspirant only when he becomes introverted. So long as he is extroverted, Self-realisation is impossible. Many people try to define the Self instead of attempting to know the Self and abide in it." (Bhagavan Sri Ramana: A Pictorial Biography p.77)

For all his much vaunted technological progress, modern man has not managed to find a lasting solution to his inner malaise. Any person who takes the trouble to travel across different countries will invariably notice that people are unhappy everywhere. Seldom, if ever, does one meet an individual who can truthfully say "I am absolutely happy".

The principal cause of man's unhappiness is his irrational attachment to material things. We overlook the fact that all material possessions are by their very nature subject to change, decay and destruction. We have invested a lot of faith in perishable objects. Why have our possessions become so precious to us? Is it not because our minds have foolishly attached to them an importance that they inherently lack? Our minds, for instance, mistakenly attribute a great value to a diamond, whereas in actuality a diamond, even a rare and polished one, is nothing more than a mere stone.

The popularity of materialism in our day and the corresponding decline in respect for otherworldly concerns can be partly traced to the doctrines of Marx, Engels and Lenin who believed in dialectical materialism. With their atheistic contempt for spirituality they liked to scoff at religion.

Let us consider the simple life of Ramana. Apart from a few personal effects like his loin cloth and walking stick, which, interestingly enough, was an article that he himself had painstakingly carved out of wood, did Ramana really possess anything else? He managed to survive on the offerings of the

food from various devotees. He was the poorest of the poor. Yet Ramana was the happiest of men. He had neither worries nor personal problems and he enjoyed the blissful state of deep sleep. Why was he such an exceptional individual? Was it not because he was totally immersed in the Divine? Therefore mundane matters never troubled his inner being. There is a saying of Ramana that deserves to be pondered over by all : "Divestment of possessions is the highest happiness." (Talks with Ramana Maharshi; 6 ed; p. 187)

On account of the fact that our lives are devoid of a spiritual foundation, we tend to over rate our material possessions, forgetting that these, like the toys of children, should be seen as things of nothing more than temporary interest. In the stormy sea of life, why hang onto ephemeral things, when the only reliable refuge from sorrow is the deathless Self?

All the great religions of the world have unanimously frowned on man's fondness for possessions. Their underlying message is that the renunciation of possessions qualifies one for Self-Realisation. This theme is like a golden thread that runs through all the sacred scriptures.

There is the oft-quoted saying of Jesus that "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 19 : 24).

Even more interesting is this excerpt (Matthew 6 : 26-33) from Christ : "Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ? And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin : And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The gist of these biblical lines can be expressed in one simple sentence

: Abide in the Self (i.e. God) and all your material needs will be automatically provided for you. Ramana not only advocated these teachings but also practised them. He was the very apotheosis of Christianity.

The word 'surrender' simply means yielding oneself to the superior power or authority of another. Surrender also implies the rejection of all resistance to the operation of that power. When one gives up struggling, what inevitably follows is a state of submission.

Sometimes during the course of a war, when a group of soldiers sense that defeat is imminent, without a word of protest they lay down their arms and willingly surrender themselves to the more powerful victorious army. They are only too pleased to end the fighting. They have a white flag or raise their arms upwards in a gesture of peace. They do not mind surrendering and becoming prisoners of war. There is usually in this kind of surrender the absence of any element of coercion for none has forced them to do so. Genuine surrender takes place only when a soldier has cast aside all hatred for his enemies. Former foes become his future friends. A soldier who is puffed up with pride, and hence lacking humility, will shudder at the thought of surrendering. We are all soldiers in the battlefield of life. Should we allow our narrow ego-centered minds to direct the course of our lives or should the immeasurably more powerful Life-Force be allowed to direct us? Are we going to be guided by the self or the Self?

He who has surrendered to himself is in a position to regard all the vicissitudes of life with equanimity. As every event in life is divinely ordained, why be elated during good times ? By the same token, why complain or become depressed when there are bad times ? Instead of resigning ourselves to our fate, we vainly try to change that which is not within our power to change. What we regard as 'misfortunes' , these unbeknown to us turn out to be blessings in disguise. Why try to swim against the current of Life ? By surrendering fully to the mysterious workings of the preordained cosmic plan one learns to accept whatever happens to oneself, come what may, secure in the knowledge that everything emanates from the Divine.

When a pious Christian zealously recites the Lord's Prayer, one wonders whether he is always cognisant of the great significance of the following noteworthy words : "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is*

in heaven" (Matthew 6 : 10). Through prayer he is invoking the overpowering influence of 'Thy will' (the Lord's will) in contradistinction to his own restrictive, private and selfish will. For the Lord alone has become his spiritual beacon. Can the Divine will govern his life unless he discards his own personal will ? If he is prepared to do that, the Divine becomes the source of inspiration for all his thoughts, words and deeds. Thus he finds fullfilment in life by surrendering himself to the will of the Almighty.

All theistic religions have emphasised the importance of surrendering to the invincible and invisible power. Prayer is one of the most popular methods of surrendering oneself to the Most High . A Muslim is expected to bow downwards and kneel subserviently and pray five times every day. Praying should never become a mere mechanical ritual. The sole aim of prayer should be the total annihilation of the ego so that the mind gets automatically merged in the spiritual heart which is *within* oneself. Instead of probing and plunging inwards why do so many uselessly direct their efforts outwards ? Is God external to ourselves ? One is reminded of the amusing Zen story of the monk who was searching for his ox in the fields while forgetting that he was actually riding on it !

When Dr.Syed wanted to know the steps by which he could achieve surrender, Ramana said : "There are two ways; one is looking into the source of 'I' and merging into that source. The other is feeling 'I am helpless by myself, God alone is all-powerful and except throwing myself completely on Him, there is no other means of safety for me,' and thus gradually developing the conviction that God alone exists and the ego does not count. Both methods lead to the same goal. Complete surrender is another name for *jnana* or liberation." (Day by Day with Bhagavan by A. Devaraja Mudaliar p. 176)

The first method is clearly explained in Ramana's helpful booklet entitled *Who am I?*. The second prescribed method, involves the progressive strengthening of the realisation that one is unable to help oneself and powerless whereas God is omnipotent.

In a strikingly beautiful passage Ramana has explained that surrender is no other than the state of pure devotion which is called bhakti : "Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether he appears or vanishes ; await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as *you* please, it is not surrender but command to Him.

You cannot have Him obey you and yet think that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden : you have no longer any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. This is *bhakti.*" (Talks; p.425)

Praying is also an exercise in humility. A person with a puffed-up ego cannot bring himself either to pray or beg. Praying is in essence a sort of begging or supplication. We frown on beggars. Actually we can learn a lot from beggars for they at least have temporarily humbled themselves. There is a saying that it is more difficult to receive than to give. It is psychologically more of a struggle to be a receiver of alms than to be a giver because, not infrequently, there is a touch of patronizing arrogance in the minds of those who are charitable. Through the power of prayer these fortifications of the ego, such as pride and self-importance, can be eroded. Thus prayer opens the door to Self-Realisation.

It is best if our prayers are not angry petitions to God but long and friendly conversations with Him. A prayer can take the form of a private chat in the inmost recesses of the mind during which one can bare the heart. It is an opportunity to talk over with God your worries, difficulties and problems, telling Him everything and withholding nothing. In that atmosphere of complete frankness there is a great unburdening of the unconscious and the restoration of one's peace of mind. Only with such openness and honesty will it become possible to establish a direct link with God.

Auguste Sabatier, a liberal French theologian, has stated that "religion is an intercourse, a conscious and voluntary relation, entered into by a soul in distress with the mysterious power upon which it feels itself to depend, and upon which its fate is contingent. This intercourse with God is realized by prayer. Prayer is religion in act ; that is, prayer is real religion. It is prayer that distinguishes the religious phenomenon from such similar or neighbouring phenomenon as purely moral or aesthetic sentiment. Religion is nothing if it be not the vital act by which the entire mind seeks to save itself by clinging to the principle from which it draws its life. This act is prayer, by which term I understand no vain exercise of words, no mere repetition of certain sacred formulae, but the very movement itself of the soul, putting itself in a personal relation of contact with the mysterious power of which it feels the presence - it may be even before it has a name by which to call

it. Wherever this interior prayer is lacking, there is no religion; wherever, on the other hand, this prayer rises and stirs the soul, even in the absence of forms or of doctrines, we have living religion ." (The Varieties of Religious experience by William James p. 464)

Bhagavan Ramana's views on this all-important subject are worthy of consideration :

Khanna : "Is there destiny ? And if what is destined to happen will happen is there any use in prayer or effort or should we just remain idle ?"

Bhagavan Ramana : "There are only two ways to conquer destiny or be independent of it. One is to enquire for whom is this destiny and discover that only the ego is bound by destiny and not the Self, and that the ego is non-existent. The other way is to kill the ego by completely surrendering to the Lord, by realizing one's helplessness and saying all the time : 'Not I but Thou, oh Lord !' and giving up all sense of 'I' and 'mine' and leaving it to the Lord to do what He likes with you. Surrender can never be regarded as complete so long as the devotee wants this or that from the Lord. True surrender is love of God for the sake of love and nothing else, not even for the sake of salvation. In other words, complete effacement of the ego is necessary to conquer destiny, whether you achieve this effacement through Self-enquiry or through bhakti-marga."

Khanna : "Are our prayers granted ? "

Bhagavan Ramana : "Yes, they are granted. No thought will go in vain. Every thought will produce its effect some time or other. Thought - force will never go in vain." (Day by Day with Bhagavan, p.288)

The message of the above-mentioned passage may come as a bit of a shock to many. In the past have our declarations of love for God been unblemished? By using sweet devotional words have we not tried to cajole the Almighty into doing things for us? Did we not have ulterior motives for singing His praises? Our prayers have been tainted by the desire to receive various benefits, including that of spiritual Liberation. With impure hearts we sought after God who is immeasurably great. He surely deserves to be adored for His own sake.

It has been estimated that there are eighty-four yogic bodily postures or asanas. However, only a few of these are chosen for meditation. One can select those postures in which it is possible to remain strainlessly for the longest time. It was Patanjali's view that an asana should be sthira-sukham (firm and comfortable).

Bhagavan Ramana was asked : Which posture (asana) is the best ? He replied : "Any *asana*, possibly *sukha asana* (easy posture or the half-Buddha position). But that is immaterial for *jnana*, the Path of Knowledge." There was a related question : Does Maharshi advise any physical posture for the Europeans ? He answered : "It may be advisable. However, it must be clearly understood that meditation is not prohibited in the absence of *asanas*, or prescribed times, or any accessories of the kind." (Talks p. 10 and 11)

Bhagavan Ramana did not categorically state that spiritual progress takes place only in those persons who are prepared to practice certain asanas with all the patience and discipline that these exercises entail. On the other hand, he did not declare that these practices are without value. It is noteworthy that he did not give too much importance to asanas. He has treated that subject in a some what casual manner as if to tell us that we should rather be concerning ourselves with more serious questions. Ramana did not condemn hatha yoga. While approving the practice of asanas he has nevertheless indicated that they are not indispensable because "meditation is not prohibited in the absence of asanas".

What are the implications of Bhagavan Ramana's statements ? One may reasonably infer that : First, although one may practice asanas and meditate at the same time, these are actually two unrelated activities in the sense that they do not necessarily have to be done together. Second, one may meditate at any time of the day or night ; meditation can also be done wherever one happens to be, in a quiet shrine room or a crowded railway compartment : the practice of meditation cannot be restricted to any particular time or place. One can meditate whilst passively lying on a sandy beach or when walking hurriedly along a busy street ; similarly meditation is possible when having a shower or when mowing the lawn. Any time is meditation time. Third, meditation is compatible with physical activity and movement. This point is worth mentioning because some Zen teachers insist on the absolute motionlessness of the body as a condition that has to be

fulfilled before meditation commences. Probably this requirement originates from their mistaken belief that the stillness of the body is a necessary prelude to the stillness of the mind. Accomplished yogis who are merged in the Self have the capacity to remain in a state of blissful inner meditation while doing work, which may involve the rigorous exertion of their muscles.

Bhagavan Ramana regarded all animals as his companions. Never referring to an animal as 'it' , he respectfully called them by their names as though they were human beings. Like St. Francis of Assisi who was attuned to all God's creatures, he had a good rapport with animals. Ramana was fond of animals and they in turn were fond of him. He fed and caressed them. The exquisitely carved statue of the cow Lakshmi at Ramanasramam is a constant reminder that animals must not only be treated gently but also that they, like ourselves, are potentially capable of Self-Realisation. Lakshmi was a case in point : she was a Self- Realised being and every Friday pujas are performed in front of this statue. Narasimha Swami observed that Ramana "treats all animals as fellow ascetics, who have come to work out their Karma in his proximity. He talks to them and gives them a few simple directions which they mostly understand and obey ."(Self Realisation ; p. 163)

Like a long extinct volcano of gigantic proportions on a flat field, the Arunachala mountain dominates the vast arid landscape of Tiruvannamalai. Its silhouette is particularly striking at dawn and dusk. The word 'Arunachala' has several meanings. Etymologically it means 'the Steady Light' (Aruna = Light ; Achala = Steady, Firm, Unwavering). Let us examine the word 'Aruna' as explained by Ramana in verse no.2 in *Five Hymns to Arunachala* :

A = Sat (Being)
RU = Chit (Consciousness)
NA = Ananda (Bliss)

Therefore 'Aruna' stands for Being - Consciousness - Bliss. 'Achala' signifies Perfection.

This ancient mountain was so much part and parcel of the life of Ramana. No visit to Ramanasramam would be complete without at least admiring the mysterious beauty of Arunachala. One can of course climb and reach its summit by walking along the stony footpaths. The colour of Arunachala

cannot correctly be described. It is a rusty earth-brown sienna with hues of rosy pink. Craggy old rocks of different shapes and sizes lie scattered on precipitous slopes. Its present stark appearance is probably the result of thousands of years of soil erosion.

The Virupaksha cave is very small and fascinating. Ramana lived there for about 16 years (1900-1916). Evidently he did not suffer from claustrophobia. In the extraordinary quietness of this cave Ramana composed some of his major works. Celebrities like Ganapati Muni and F.H.Humphreys used to visit Ramana there. This particular abode of Ramana was named after Saint Virupaksha who had lived on Arunachala about 300 to 400 years ago. It is said that when Virupaksha was about to pass away, he requested his devotees to leave him alone in this cave. When they returned the next morning they found only vibhuti (holy ash) in the form of his body. It is believed that that was the only way whereby the saint could have remained on Arunachala, since none is permitted to be buried on this sacred mountain, which is reverentially worshipped as a Siva lingam. Inside the cave, Ramana with his own hands built a pedestal on which he formed a lingam with the vibhuti of Saint Virupaksha.

Some find it difficult to understand the religious significance of vibhuti (holy ash). Vibhuti represents the Ultimate in the sense that ash cannot be reduced to anything else. A corpse that is cremated becomes a lump of ash. Viewed in another way, vibhuti is symbolic of the perishability of the human body which is in contradistinction to the imperishability of the Self.

Probably the most endearing spot in the whole ashram is the Meditation Hall. In a corner of this rectangular room one can see the very couch that Ramana used. This piece of furniture and his photograph that is placed on it, are the cynosure of all eyes. Near this couch is a small hanging oil lamp. It is subtly symbolic of the Steady Light. All visitors are expected to remain quiet here. A strange stillness pervades the entire room. Although Bhagavan Ramana's physical body can no longer be seen in the Meditation Hall, one can actually feel there His living invisible presence.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

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ELOQUENT SILENCE

Kenneth Grant

Imagine a vast canvas peopled with countless individuals and teeming with events too ramifying and varied to enumerate, but which all fall into such broad categories as scenes of hatred and animosity, of pleasure and sorrow, of elation and despondency, of crime and black lust. Now, as that canvas is void of real content, but only represents the fevered dreams of the artist who committed the complex scene to its surface, so also is the world around us such a mental picture void of all reality and all meaning except that which we, as limited and fragmentary expressions of the whole - as Jivas in fact - read in it. Bhagavan taught us that however hard we try to extricate ourselves from this tangled web of deception, from this glorious and terrifying labyrinth of Maya, we shall never succeed so long as the void nature of the forms we see around us is not utterly realized. Then will all dissolve into the void substratum of all things, the pure and faultless Self which emanated the dream for Its delight in Its role as Jiva. To do this we have to step outside the clamour and the noise; we have to reject the cacophonous Mantra of the Samsara which is meaningless noise, or else a symphony of merely human perfection, and merge with the Essence of that Silence which is the Mantra of the Void. In the still, unfathomable regions of our being there lies the common ground of all; the ground from whence all images spring, from whence all desires and dreams find their origin and source. And this base of the universal and eternal life is Perfection itself, for it is void of all conceptual thought of all form and of all that we know as pertaining to the Samsara. Beyond even the tranquility of Satva, this one Indestructible Ground of all shines as the Self of All, and may be entered through the Silent and Unmindful regions of the Heart, wherein lies coiled the Adamantine secret of Its glorious uniqueness.

It is to the end that we may free ourselves from the glistening webs of thought whereby we have so surely chained ourselves, that Bhagavan brought us the incalculable gift of His life on earth as Sri Ramana. Asking who Am I?; stepping outside of the canvas at all times with unceasing vigilance and watchfulness, we may bring to birth that Unutterable Compassion for all beings which He manifested before the eyes of all, thus living the truth of Sage Milarepa's words: "If ye realize the Voidness, Compassion will arise

within your hearts".

Nowhere before in all the world has so perfect a proof of the truth of these words been evidenced by the common man; nowhere before has the complete merging of Bhakti and Jnana been demonstrated before the eyes of the myriad throng. And if we, in the life of the seething canvas, yet fail to see the truth and endeavour to extricate ourselves from the suicidal chain of thoughts and events, who is to blame?

Yet it was through Silence rather than through speech that Bhagavan conveyed to us the supreme token of His inestimable worth for us today. His words as emitted through the physical frame of Sri Ramana were destined to pass away in accordance with the very nature of the Samsara of which they formed part, but His silence, His ineffable Mantra of the void places of the Heart vibrates now and forever for all those who for one moment even step beyond the pale of the disconnected picture of events and plunge within past thought, past action, past all that characterizes what for want of a better phrase we call the outer and limited life of the Jiva. In Bhagavan's Silence, as it abides at the core of each of the various manifestations of the one Self, may be found the priceless jewel which He secreted for us in the lotus of His rapturous life. This Mantra vibrating in tune with the Heart of the Hill which stands silently witnessing the passing of civilizations, of hopes and dreams, of sorrows and joys, is potent to reap the rich harvest of enlightenment for those who, instead of bickering and squabbling over trifles, withdraw the mind from its extroverted function of thought and fix it firmly on the void nature of things, which are then seen to pass by as a dream of the canvas of the unattached mind.

This is no matter of making the mind a blank, or stopping forcibly the thinking process, but merely of stepping aside and watching the endless stream flow by, while realizing constantly the void nature of all the ideas and thoughts that take shape in the mind's work room. Contact the substratum of these myriad images and *there* will be found the pure river of the One Consciousness, irresistable in its adamantine might, calling to the Jiva to merge again with its source, to let the shadows and scenes be mirrored on the shining surface of its unsurpassable brilliance, and to fathom the depths from whence they spring to take on their phantom life before once more melting and merging in the mighty current that bears life endlessly on. Nor is it a

matter of merely stopping the ears to the din and the roar of the torrent as it flows and laves about us, but of understanding the void nature of noise, as when a word that is uttered incessantly again and again becomes inane and void of all meaning, thus liberating the mind temporarily from the shackles of conventional significance. It is only when the senses, each in turn, are thus realized to be founded on a non-real basis that the mind is free to return to its pristine, natural state, and mirror the Pure Consciousness which it verily is, bereft of all the meanings and significations which we, as limited Jivas put upon things for our own selfish advantage.

(Call Divine Jan. 1, 1954)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

-o0o-

Thou art the only Real,
The center Light, the Heart.
Thine is the wondrous pow'r
That off from Thee is not.
That power whirls the roll
Of subtle films of mind
Before Thy pure white light,
Thus colour'd forms stream forth
Athwart the mental lens,
On Thee, the seeming screen,
As in a cinema show.
The many change and pass,
The one, remainest Thou.

Arunachala Ashtakam Ver.6

BHAGAVAN MADE HIM SING

M. Ravindra Narayanan

Saranagathi (which mean to surrender) is the title of a song composed by one of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's great devotees Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer. This song attained great fame and is very popular among the devotees of Bhagavan. Not surprising, for the song has been invested with the unbounded grace of Ramana, and has rightly earned for its author, the affectionate epithet 'Saranagathi Tatha'. The song has, over the years, served as a beacon light for tormented souls. Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer's descendants and innumerable Ramana devotees have not only found solace, but also solutions to their mundane and spiritual problems by taking refuge in this song.

What kind of person was Saranagathi Tatha? What was his place amongst Bhagavan's devotees? What is the legacy that he has left behind? It is important to find out, for such a devotee's story would help us understand Bhagavan and his teachings better. It will help us understand how Bhagavan's Grace unfolds and engulfs us, if only we kept our hearts open, and melted with love for him.

Ramaswami Iyer belonged to Manavasi village in the fertile Tiruchy district of Tamilnadu. He was born in a pious family and was brought up in the strict traditions of a Brahmin household. After completing his education, he joined the State Public Works Department as Overseer. He was constantly on tour on official duty, Tiruvannamalai being one of the towns on his official itinerary. In 1907, during one of his visits, Ramaswami Iyer had his first darshan of Brahmana Swami, as Sri Ramana Maharshi was then referred to, at the Virupaksha Cave.

It was in March 1908, that a great change took place in Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer's life. He was already in his late thirties then. Promoted as supervisor in the public works department, he was transferred to Villupuram, about 60 Km from Tiruvannamalai. Highly impressed with the grandeur of the holy Arunachala hill and the great temple, Ramaswami Iyer decided to live at Tiruvannamalai and discharge his official duties from there.

Gambhiram Sesha Iyer who had renounced his occupation of municipal

Overseer to be with Ramana and serve him, was instrumental in guiding Ramaswami Iyer to Bhagavan's holy presence this time, his second meeting with Bhagavan. For many years until then, he had been suffering from severe stomach disorders, which did not yield to medical treatment. He could not sleep well too. Ramaswami Iyer therefore appealed to Bhagavan to cure him of his ailment. Bhagavan replied that he was neither a doctor nor could he perform miracles. Ramaswami Iyer felt deeply disappointed and openly expressed his anguish at not being able to secure Bhagavan's Grace. Bhagavan then looked at him most compassionately and said, "Whatever it may be, one must ask, to whom is the suffering, and what is it that is affected." While saying this Bhagavan waved his hand in a peculiar manner. Ramaswami Iyer could see a flash of light emanating from that divine hand. He felt peace flood his heart,a peace he had never experienced before.

That day was the eighteenth day of the Tamil month of Adi, and being a festive occasion, many devotees had brought specially cooked delicacies. Bhagavan invited Ramaswami Iyer to partake in the feast. But the latter refused, saying that he was not capable of digesting such sumptuous fare. But Bhagavan insisted and Ramaswami Iyer had to yield. He ate well and slept profoundly that night, after many years of inadequate sleep. He consequently discovered that his stomach problems had disappeared completely, never to recur in his life. Ramaswami Iyer's relatives who were averse to his going for Bhagavan's darshan, changed their stand, and his wife and children began carrying food uphill for Bhagavan and his devotees.

Immediately after this miraculous cure of his ailment, another momentous incident took place. On his next visit to the Virupaksha Cave, Ramaswami Iyer appealed to Bhagavan, *"Jesus and other great souls came into this world to redeem sinners. Is there hope for me?"* Bhagavan got up from where he was sitting and moving towards Ramaswami Iyer said, *"There is Hope, Yes, There is Hope"*. Bhagavan's assurance of protection transformed Ramaswami Iyer's life. It instilled in him a tremendous faith in Bhagavan and made him place his life in His hands.

Ramaswami Iyer possessed adequate knowledge in South Indian Classical Music. On one occasion in 1908, Bhagavan explained to him the rules of musical prosody and rhyme that characterise classical compositions. This was quite unexpected, for Ramaswami Iyer had until then never thought of

composing songs. He however found to his pleasant surprise that he could effortlessly compose. Thus was born his first composition 'Dikku Verillai Deenarakshaka', in which he prays for Bhagavan's protection. It is clear that this was part of a grand Divine plan. This Divine plan had discovered yet another conduit through which Bhagavan's teachings could be disseminated and through which His Grace would manifest itself.

Truly it is said, that when the All Pervading One descends on earth, He brings with Him blessed messengers to spread His teachings and the fragrance of His Grace. Thus came a Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, who announced to the world, that He was a true Maharshi, the Lord Himself, and who gave us the monumental work, 'Ramana Gita', 'Sad Darsanam' and the matchless hymn of praise 'Chatvarimsat' ; a Sivaprakasam Pillai, who was first responsible for bringing out Bhagavan's teachings in his own words; the first western seeker F.H.Humphreys, who was a distinguished forerunner to others from the west who came later; and Echammal and the Mudaliar Granny, for whom feeding Bhagavan everyday was a labour of love. Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer formed part of this illustrious team of devotees in the first decade of this century

Others would also come. Muruganar, T.K.Sundaresa Iyer, Viswanatha Swami, Devaraja Mudaliar, G.V.Subbaramayya, Suri Nagamma, Ramaswami Pillai, Paul Brunton, Arthur Osborne, Major Chadwick and many others, who through literary or poetic works, physical labour or whatever else their calling, would serve Bhagavan and His Cause. In Ramaswami Iyer's case, it was music through which he served Bhagavan and His Cause. From the year 1908 to the year of Bhagavan's Maha Nirvana in 1950 Ramaswami Iyer composed about one hundred songs in praise of Bhagavan and other deities. His compositions, full of devotion, speak of Bhagavan's teachings, His method of Self-Enquiry, His unbounded love for devotees and His Guidance and Grace.

Ramaswami Iyer served as one of the pall bearers for Mother Azhagamma on her Maha Samadhi in 1922. The holy remains were brought from Skandasramam down to the Pali Teertha and interned there. On the tenth day, after pooja to the Matrubuteswara Linga, which was installed on the Samadhi of Mother Azhagamma, many devotees began composing slokas in her praise. Ramaswami Iyer was sitting in a corner unnoticed. Bhagavan called for him and enquired whether he did not think of composing anything.

Ramaswami Iyer wrote a song on a piece of paper and handed it over to Bhagavan. Bhagavan then asked him to sit opposite Him and sing the composition. To Ramaswami Iyer's great surprise, he was able to sing fluently. The melody and the poetry flowed simultaneously from his mouth, without a break, in the immediate presence of Bhagavan. Thus was born the beautiful composition 'Azhagannai', in the raga 'Vasanta', in which the composer speaks of the Mother's glory.

Countless have been the instances, when Ramaswami Iyer encountered personal problems. In every case an immediate solution has been the result, thanks to Bhagavan's Grace. Some of these incidents are worth narrating for the simple reason that they affirm our faith in Bhagavan and cement our devotional ties with Him.

When Ramaswami Iyer was living in Berhampore, in the year 1914, he once suffered from boils all over his legs. The pain and the agony were too much to bear. All systems of medicine were tried, but to no avail and even surgery proved futile. Bouts of fever would often occur, compounding the problem. Ramaswami Iyer was constantly doing Arunachala smarana (repetition of the name). One early morning, there was a knock on the door. There were two visitors from Tiruvannamalai. They informed Ramaswami Iyer, that they were on a pilgrimage to Kası and that Bhagavan had instructed them to meet him on the way, at Berhampore. Ramaswami Iyer was overwhelmed at Bhagavan's concern and care. The pilgrims to Kasi learnt of his ailment and applied an indigenous medicine which they had brought along. The next day the boils had completely disappeared and Ramaswami Iyer was relieved of the agonising pain. Immediately after this, as an expression of his heartfelt gratitude, Ramaswami Iyer composed the song, 'Saranagathi'.

Bhagavan was instrumental in fixing up the marriage of Ramaswami Iyer's eldest daughter Rajammal. Once, He asked Ramaswami Iyer whether he did not think of planning for the marriage of his daughters. The great devotee Echammal, who was present then, suggested to Bhagavan that a young man known to her would make an ideal husband for Rajammal. Bhagavan immediately approved and asked Ramaswami Iyer to make all arrangements. Ramaswami Iyer hesitated at first, as he felt he did not possess the means to conduct a decent marriage. However, Bhagavan's words had to be obeyed. Trusting completely in Bhagavan, he went about the task with enthusiasm.

Bhagavan himself fixed the *Muhurtham*(the auspicious date and time for the marriage ceremony). Bhagavan's devotees and many of Saranagathi Tatha's friends offered timely help and the marriage was conducted properly.

This incident is significant from two angles. Bhagavan, in reply to a question by Paul Brunton has said, that the Sadguru takes care of not only the devotees' spiritual needs, but also their worldly necessities. The minutest incidents of a devotees' life have received the loving and pointed attention of Bhagavan. This incident also underscores the fact that once a devotee places his life in Bhagavan's hands, the devotee himself comes to possess tremendous faith in Him and His protection. He then leaves everything to Bhagavan and lets things take their own course. Ramana devotees owe a lot to senior devotees like Ramaswami Iyer, who have shown that it is possible to live a beautiful life, bereft of sorrow and anxiety, once one surrenders to Bhagavan and accepts Him as the only refuge.

The last months of Bhagavan's earthly life saw him confined to the tiny room, now called the Nirvana room, opposite the Matrubuteswara temple. During these last days, every devotee received his share of immense Grace that flowed from Bhagavan. An incident concerning Ramaswami Iyer has to be recounted for understanding the magic that was Bhagavan's Grace and for understanding the beauty that underlined Saranagathi Tatha's total surrender. A few days before the Maha Nirvana, Ramaswami Iyer's wife Smt.Subbulakshmi was stung by a scorpion. Instead of calling a doctor or rushing her to the hospital, as the other members of the family were desperately wanting to, Ramaswami Iyer ran to Ramanasramam. Bhagavan had to be told first. At that time there happened to be no one with Bhagavan except an attendant. Ramaswami Iyer went to the western window of the room and informed the same to Bhagavan. The most significant aspect of this incident is that, Ramaswami Iyer did not even bother to notice whether Bhagavan had heard him or not. Bhagavan had been told, and He would take care. Without waiting for Bhagavan's reaction, Ramaswami Iyer went back home. His wife recovered within a few hours, without recourse to doctors or medicines. Such was the faith that Saranagathi Tatha had in Bhagavan.

Small wonder then that his 'Saranagathi' song stirs myriad emotions in the heart and caresses the soul of listeners. A miracle wrought by a rendering of this song has been recorded. Sri T.K.Sundaresa Iyer's daughter-in-law,

was living in Kanpur. Her residence was on the third floor of an apartment building. Water scarcely reached the taps on that floor and they had to bring water from the ground floor of the building. This work was done by her husband. One day when she was very much agitated over this problem, she began singing the 'Saranagathi' song. Water began to flow from the tap and she could fill her vessels. Surprised and thrilled she repeated the song. Again water flowed from the tap. Thereafter whenever she sang the song, water would flow from the tap and stop when the song ended. She demonstrated this miracle to her husband, and later to her father when he visited her. All other songs were tried by her but they were of no use. Bhagavan himself has narrated this incident to several of his devotees.

During his career in the P.W.D., one of Ramaswami Iyer's superior officers would taunt him saying, that for the work he was doing, he did not deserve the salary, which was Rs. 150/- per month. When he told Bhagavan about it, He exclaimed, "Does he feel Rs.150/- is too much. What would he say if you got Rs.200/-?" The next Government Gazette announced a promotion and a salary increase to Rs.200/- for Ramaswami Iyer!

Bhagavan had even during the Virupaksha cave days, instructed Ramaswami Iyer to recite the 'Ribhu Gita' regularly, and also follow the path of Self-Enquiry which He taught. Following Bhagavan's instructions to the letter, Ramaswami Iyer could perceive tremendous changes taking place within himself. He firmly believed that Bhagavan had taken total charge of his life, and was responsible for him to evolve not only as a composer of excellent merit, but also into a fine human being and a spiritually strong person.

After Bhagavan's Nirvana in 1950, Ramaswami Iyer found it impossible to compose even one song. He said that his voice was stilled and his imagination made immobile. He has composed songs in praise of Matrubuteswara and Goddess Yogambika, enshrined in Ramanasramam, on Arunachaleswara, and on various other deities. All his five daughters have carried on his legacy and popularised his songs. Saranagathi Tatha passed away in April 1962, at his son's house in Madras. A saga of surrender, of love expressed through music, came to an end at the age of ninety.

Old devotees remember Ramaswami Iyer as an outgoing and cheerful personality, who, even in his late eighties, would walk along the streets of

Tiruvannamalai with his support stick, eager to teach his songs on Bhagavan to anyone who cared to learn them. His compositions are being sung by his descendants and other devotees. Ramaswami Iyer's devotion and love for Bhagavan, his invaluable service to His Cause through music and his total surrender to Bhagavan, make his life worthy of study and emulation.

I have given a free translation of three of Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer's songs below:

Dikku Verillai Deenarakshaka. **Raga: Kamboji.**

Pallavi: There is no refuge, Arunachala Ramana, Oh protector of the weak.

Anupallavi: You are surrounded by your devotees who are silent bees, intoxicated by tasting the nectar of your presence.

Charanam: Totally scorched by the heat of my ego, I have forgotten my true self. Your Grace is the best medicine to rid the world of ignorance and suffering. Oh embodiment of Compassion.

Like the baby lion which out of ignorance, joined a herd of goats and had to be shown its true identity by its mother, You have revealed to me my true nature, by granting me your protection.

(Therefore there is no other refuge, Arunachala Ramana)

Tudikka Ariyen Ayya **Raga: Ananda Bairavi.**

Pallavi: I know not the ways of worshipping you, the perfect embodiment of Grace, who is always in the transcendental state. (The turiya state)

Anupallavi: You are the one who, pouring cool waters upon the boiling cauldron, the mind, sows the seed of perfect knowledge in the heart.

Charanam: With a melting heart full of love and joy, and shedding tears, I look up to you. I see you enter and take total possession of my being. I forget myself and wholly give myself unto you.

You are formless, yet, for us you appear with a form, Oh all pervading one.

Suffering humans, having no other refuge, have come in millions and wept at your feet. Such a huge volume of tears has concentrated to form

a red mole in your feet, the divine feet which even great saints have found impossible to attain. (I know not the ways of worshipping such a One.)

(Old devotees might remember that Bhagavan had a red colour mole on his right leg. This song refers to this mole.)

Saranagathi **Raga: Navaroz**

Pallavi: I surrender unto thee. There is no other refuge now. Please protect me.

Anupallavi: You are the Lord of Arunachala, who grants mukti even if merely thought of; Oh Ramana, you are the embodiment and the raincloud of compassion.

Charanam: This is the appropriate moment to grant me the glance of your Grace. If you delay, what am I to do? Please remove my sorrow and grant me Bliss. I cannot bear your indifference any longer, Oh Ramana, the embodiment of Brahman. (I surrender unto you).

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

-o0o-

Self-surrender is the same as mind-control. The ego submits when it recognises the higher authority of the *atman*, the Self. This is the beginning of surrender. Although the ego cannot exist without the Self, yet, due to its ignorance of this fact, it remains rebellious, and acts on its own initiatives and by its own will. True surrender is the melting of the ego in its Source, the Heart, the Self.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

WITH SRI BHAGAVAN ON A WALK TO THE SAMUDRAM LAKE

T. K. Sundaresa Iyer

The Samudram Lake at the foot of Arunachalam and near Sri Ramanasramam is a very extensive one, the summer rains nor the winter monsoons in Tiruvannamalai rarely fill up this tank except once in a way when it overflows.

Thus it overflowed once long ago. The sight of it was very grand and the overflow at the outlet was as wide as a river. The tank really seemed a sea (Samudram). Bhagavan told us that it was called "Samudram" because a certain local ruler had this tank constructed as a miniature sea to give an idea to his Queen of what a sea would look like; for she had never seen one and she a carrying queen now desired to.

The overflow of the Samudram Tank in Tiruvannamalai is such a rare event. and people thronged to see the sight. Afterwards they came to Bhagavan and talked about it.

One morning after breakfast the devotees in the hall expressed to Bhagavan a desire to visit the Samudram. Bhagavan was humane enough to accept the suggestion and all of us went for a stroll to see it. The tank bund is over two miles long and we walked from the Asramam to the tank about a mile and then the whole distance of the bund. The presence of Bhagavan and his words were more interesting to us than the brimming tank and the grand view of the lake at the foot of the holy Arunachalam.

Bhagavan talked of many things, of which I remember, at this distance of time, only two topics of interest.

At one place, Bhagavan pointed out a palmyra tree which had decayed at the grip and embrace of a parasite banyan tree. Some bird had dropped the seed of the banyan into the palmyra and as the banyan began its growth, the Palmyra got struck, and cloven and stunted in its growth. Drawing our attention to this phenomenon, Bhagavan remarked that is just the effect of the look of Grace of the Jnani. One look into a soul and the whole tree of vasanas gathered through cycles of births is burnt down and decays. Then the reality of the Atman is experienced. In the analogy, the tree of vasanas

is the palmyra and the look of the Guru, (the seed of Grace) is the banyan. Thus Bhagavan explained to us the effect of contact with a Mahapurusha. The supreme Jnana that is obtained by the touch of the Satpurusha, can never be obtained by the study of any number of scriptures or by any store of punya karma (virtuous deeds) or by other sadhanas.

Then when we were actually at the outlet of the overflow at the end of the lake, we all marvelled at the width of it which was as wide as a river. We stayed there for sometime and then returned.

On the return walk, we happened to pass the sluice, at the middle of the bund. Pointing to it Bhagavan remarked "Look at this small outlet as opposed to the big one at the end. But for this small hole through which trickle the stream of water, the huge contents of the lake would not be helpful to the vegetation. If the bund breaks it would be a regular deluge and the entire crops would be destroyed. Only if served, properly regulated through this sluice, are the plants helped to growth. So too,is the Brahmic Consciousness. Unless the Bliss of this consciousness is gifted through the grace of the Guru, in seasoned outlets, the soul cannot be helped to vasanakshaya (the destruction of the tendencies of the mental mode); for in this process, the Atman abiding as such in its oneness with the Brahman, is established in the Astipada (the State of Being) of the Guru. Holding on to its aspects of sat chit the work of vasanakshaya proceeds as and when the thought forms arise to propel the mind into action i.e. in its Rajasic nature. This work of vasanakshaya becomes possible only in the proximity of the Guru. Hence the Guru himself is like the sluice and irrigates the souls with the grace out of His kripasamudram needed for the abidance as the Atman and doing the vasanakshaya. Whereas, if the bund is broken the full force of the whole lake rushes through sweeping everything before it. This resembles a sadhaka receiving the full force of Brahmic Consciousness without the intervening and mitigating grace of the Guru's sluice and so physically dies without the benefit of effecting the destruction of the vasanas.

(Call Divine Apr. 1, 1958)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

MY BOYHOOD FRIEND AND CLASS MATE

Yogi Ranganathan

My father who was an Inspector of Police was transferred to Tiruchuzhi in 1885. Bhagavan's father Sundaram Iyer was then practising there as a Vakil. The two became close and intimate friends. I was a class-mate of Bhagavan and my elder brother that of Bhagavan's elder brother in the local School. Our two families moved on the friendliest terms, almost as close relations. About the middle of 1888 my father was transferred to another place and we left Tiruchuzhi.

Bhagavan and his brother went to Dindigal for education and from there came to Madurai to continue their education. By that time we had also come to Madurai for our education. Bhagavan was first studying in the Mission School, and I in the Native College. But both the institutions were adjacent to each other. If my school closed earlier I would wait for Bhagavan; and if his School closed earlier he would wait for me. I and my brother, Bhagavan and His brother and a few other boys would go to the Vaigai river, play on the sands and return home. I was just one year older than Bhagavan. Bhagavan left Madurai in August 1896.

After that, I visited Bhagavan for the first time only after a long interval, along with my wife, mother and daughter. I asked whether he recognised me. He replied as if speaking from the back of his throat 'Rangan', (In those days Bhagavan spoke rarely and he had almost lost speech through disuse) and turning to Palaniswami pointed out my mother to him and asked him, 'Do you recognise this lady?' He replied, 'Yes. She came when Bhagavan was at Pavala Kunru'. I spoke to Bhagavan for some time; and then while taking leave of him said, "You have attained a great stage". He replied 'Distance lends enchantment to the view'.By this he meant, as I later learnt from many of his teachings directly and indirectly to me, that a householder's life was as good as that of an ascetic, and could equally lead one to Jnana.

On my next visit, when I was still ten or fifteen steps from Skandasramam, Bhagavan who was then cleaning his teeth near the parapet wall, observed my coming and told his mother, 'Mother, Rangan is coming' She

said 'Let him come. Let him come'. When I went and got up after prostrating before Bhagavan He said 'it is a rare privilege to get the darshan of saints. It is good to go and visit them frequently. They will weave the cloth and give it to you'. From this I gathered that if one had Bhagavan's Grace one could gain Jnana even without any effort on one's own part.

During my next visit, when Bhagavan, his mother and I alone were present, I told Bhagavan's mother, "I have also a right to a share in all that Bhagavan has gained". Mother asked Bhagavan 'Did you hear what Rangan said'. Bhagavan laughed and said, "Is he not also one of us? He has also a share".

Another time, I came to Bhagavan on my way to Madras where I wanted to try for a job. When I got up after prostrating, Bhagavan asked me 'Males can go any where and eke out a livelihood. But what arrangements have you made for your wife and children'?. I replied "I have provided for them". I stayed for a few days with Bhagavan and then went away to Madras. A few days later my elder brother visited Bhagavan and Bhagavan made kind enquiries of him whether my wife and children were getting on well, without any hardship. My brother told him, "He left some money when he started for Madras. All that has been exhausted now and they are suffering great hardship", and went away to Madurai. When, after making some efforts for a job at Madras, I returned to Bhagavan he asked me 'You told me you had provided for your wife and children. Your elder brother told me they are undergoing hardship'. I did not reply. For, Bhagavan knows all and is also all powerful. I again went to Madras, and finding my efforts for a job there were in vain, returned to Bhagavan and stayed with him for some time. During that time, one night, when I was sleeping outside on a double cot that was lying there, Bhagavan suddenly came and sat near my feet. Seeing this I got up. Bhagavan asked me "What is the matter with you? Are you restless and not getting sleep because of your family troubles? Would it be enough for you if you get Rs.10,000". I kept silent. Once when Bhagavan and I were going round the hill he said 'There are herbs on this hill which could transmute base metals into gold'. Then also I kept silent. Bhagavan used often to joke with me and laugh asking "Oh: Are you suffering very much!" He then told me 'When a man sleeps he dreams he is being beaten and that he is suffering terribly. All that would be quite real at that time. But when he wakes up he knows it was only a dream. Similarly when Jnana dawns, all the miseries

of this world would appear to be mere dream". In a few days, I returned to Madura and through a friend got a manager's job in a motor company. Later, I was also appointed as agent for the sale of buses in Ramnad and Madurai by another company, with a commission of 5 percent on all sales effected by me. From this and in other ways I got Rs.10,000/-; and I spent them on the marriages of two of my daughters and for clearing off my debts. I never used to mention my family troubles to Bhagavan, nor ask Him for anything. He was himself looking after me and my family. So why should I make any requests for this or that in particular? I left everything to him. I used to tell Bhagavan frequently 'I have entrusted my body, possessions, soul, all to Bhagavan. The entire burden of my family is hereafter yours. I am hereafter only your servant, doing only your behests. I am a puppet moved by your strings'. Bhagavan used to laugh and say "Oh, Oh". It never occurred to me to ask him for any wealth.

Once, at Skandasramam, when Bhagavan was standing, I felt his legs from his knees downwards, running my hands over them and remarked to him "When in the old days we frolicked, romped and played together, I used to feel as if I was pricked with thorns whenever your legs came in contact with my body, your skin then having been so rough and scaly. But now I find they are very soft, like velvet" Bhagavan replied "My body has completely changed. This is not the old body".

One day Bhagavan told me "Let us go to Pandava Tirtham and swim in it. Could you swim now?" I replied I had not forgotten swimming and would go with him. The next morning at 3 a.m. we both went accordingly, swam there, and played in the water as of old and returned before people could come there for their daily bath. Bhagavan told me "Let us go like this from to-morrow. But we must go early and return before people come there for their baths". I said 'Yes'. We swam like this for a few days.

One day, before dawn, when I was restless in my bed, rolling from one side to another, Bhagavan came to me and asked 'Are you not getting sleep? What are you worried about?' I told him 'I am thinking of taking up *Sanyasa.* If I do it here my people would discover it. So, I want to go away to a distant place like Varanasi and become a Sanyasi there.' He at once went and brought 'Bhakta Vijayam', read out from it the portion dealing with Vitoba's determination to remain a Sanyasi in a forest and the advice of his

son Jnana Dev, that the same mind goes with a man whether he stays at home or retires into a forest, and told me I could attain Jnana continuing to be a house holder. Thereupon I asked Bhagavan 'Why did you become a Sanyasi?' He replied 'That was my destiny', and added 'Though it is irksome to remain a householder, it is easy to attain Jnana that way.'

Once at Skandasramam, after Bhagavan and I had a bath and he was drying his body with a towel, I noticed that down from his knee to ankle the skin had peeled off and blood was oozing. I asked him what the matter was with his leg. He said he did not know. I asked 'Is it not from your legs that blood is oozing? You seem to know nothing about it!' He replied very casually. 'When I was sitting down, the fire from the charcoal brazier in which incense powder was being burnt might have burnt my skin and caused this sore'. I at once sent for some ointment and applied it to his legs. From this I learnt how, completely detached from his body, Bhagavan lived only in the Self.

One day, Bhagavan and I went round the Hill by the forest foot path close to the foot of the hill. After I had gone a little distance on that path full of thorns and sharp stones, I ran a thorn into my foot. When I lagged behind Bhagavan observed me, came to me, removed the thorn, and said 'Now there, come on'. Then I proceeded with him. After a few yards, he ran a thorn into his foot. Noticing this, I ran up to him, lifted up his foot and saw marks of several thorns there. Then I examined his other foot and found several marks there too. Thereupon he said 'Are you going to remove the new thorn or the old thorns?' So saying, with the greatest indifference, he pressed his foot on the ground and drew it forward, and the thorn broke. He then proceeded on the hill round asking me to accompany him. I was convinced that he was living completely detached from the body. I further imagined that both these incidents were designed by Bhagavan to impress me that Bhagavan was not his body.

On another occasion Bhagavan said to me 'You think you are undergoing great troubles. Hear some of mine. I was once climbing the hill up a precipitous track and when I caught hold of a rock above, the rock slipped down, and I fell on my back. The rock that slipped down and other rocks which it brought down fell over me. I managed to remove the rocks that were covering me, and to come out. Then I found my left thumb was missing from

its place; and was hanging near the little finger. I forcibly brought it back to its place and fixed it there.' At that stage in the narration Bhagavan's mother came out with the remark 'Don't ask for that horrid story. He came with blood all over the body. It was too heart-rending a spectacle.' I cannot understand who came and removed the rock, treated his wounds and fixed up the thumb. Who was the Doctor?

One day Bhagavan's mother told me in his presence that once when he was standing she saw various kinds of snakes all over his body, round his neck, chest, waist, legs and got terribly frightened; and that after a while the snakes went back to their places. I believe that was one of the visions vouchsafed by Bhagavan to his mother to wean her from the belief that Bhagavan was her son and to impress on her that He was God Himself.

Once at Skandasramam when Bhagavan, his mother and I alone were present, mother said as follows "About 10 days ago, at about this time i.e. 10 a.m. as I was looking at Bhagavan, his body disappeared gradually into a Lingam like the one in Tiruchuzhi temple. The Lingam was lustrous. First, I could not believe my eyes. I rubbed my eyes and saw. It was the same sight still. I became frightened that he was leaving us. But again gradually his body appeared in place of the Lingam". On hearing this I looked at Bhagavan. He smiled at me. From this I gathered he was confirming mother's account. When I returned home I mentioned this to the members of my family. My eldest son, was writing an account, as he termed it, of Bhagavan's marriage with his bride Jnana, and he included the above incident in it. Later when that work was being read out before Bhagavan by my son, when the portion relating to this incident was read, Bhagavan asked my son 'Who told you this?' and my son replied 'My father'. Thereupon Bhagavan said "Oh! That fellow came and told you all, is it?" Some of the bhaktas who were listening this asked what exactly was the incident referred to. Bhagavan passed it over, saying it was nothing. I gathered from the above vision of Bhagavan's mother that Bhagavan was God Himself and that the vision was vouchsafed to mother to impress on her that she was no longer to think of him as her son, but as God Supreme.

One day, when Bhagavan and I were climbing the hill, I told him that because I have had the good fortune to have Bhagavan's darshan, all my Sanchita and Agami Karma has been burnt away like a bale of cotton by

a spark of fire, and that only my Prarabdha Karma was left. He replied "Even Prarabdha will remain only so long as the mind remains. If the mind is destroyed, to whom is Prarabdha? Think over that deeply". From that I understood that once the mind is killed and Jnana is attained, there is no such thing as Prarabdha.

Once a Bhakta having done some *'Apachara'* i.e. something improper or irreverent towards Bhagavan came and asked me what he might do for expiating his offense. I advised him to do Pradakshina round Bhagavan three times. He came round Bhagavan three times accordingly, prostrated before him, and said 'Bhagavan should not keep in mind the 'apachara', I have committed. Bhagavan replied 'Where have I mind? It is only if there is a mind I can keep anything there'. It is clear from this Bhagavan has attained 'Mano Nasa'. (extinction of the mind)

When Bhagavan was in Skandasramam, a gentleman from Malabar, greatly learned and expert in yoga sastra, came and lectured for four hours on yoga. After he had finished, Bhagavan said, 'Now, you have finished, I hope, all that you had to say. The end of all your yoga is seeing lights and hearing sounds. The mind will be in *laya* i.e. there will be suspension of mental activity, till the sound or light is there. When they disappear, the mind will again emerge. The real thing is to achieve 'Mano Nasa' or extinction of the mind. That is what is called 'Jnana'. The other man thereupon said 'What you say is the truth' and took leave of Bhagavan.

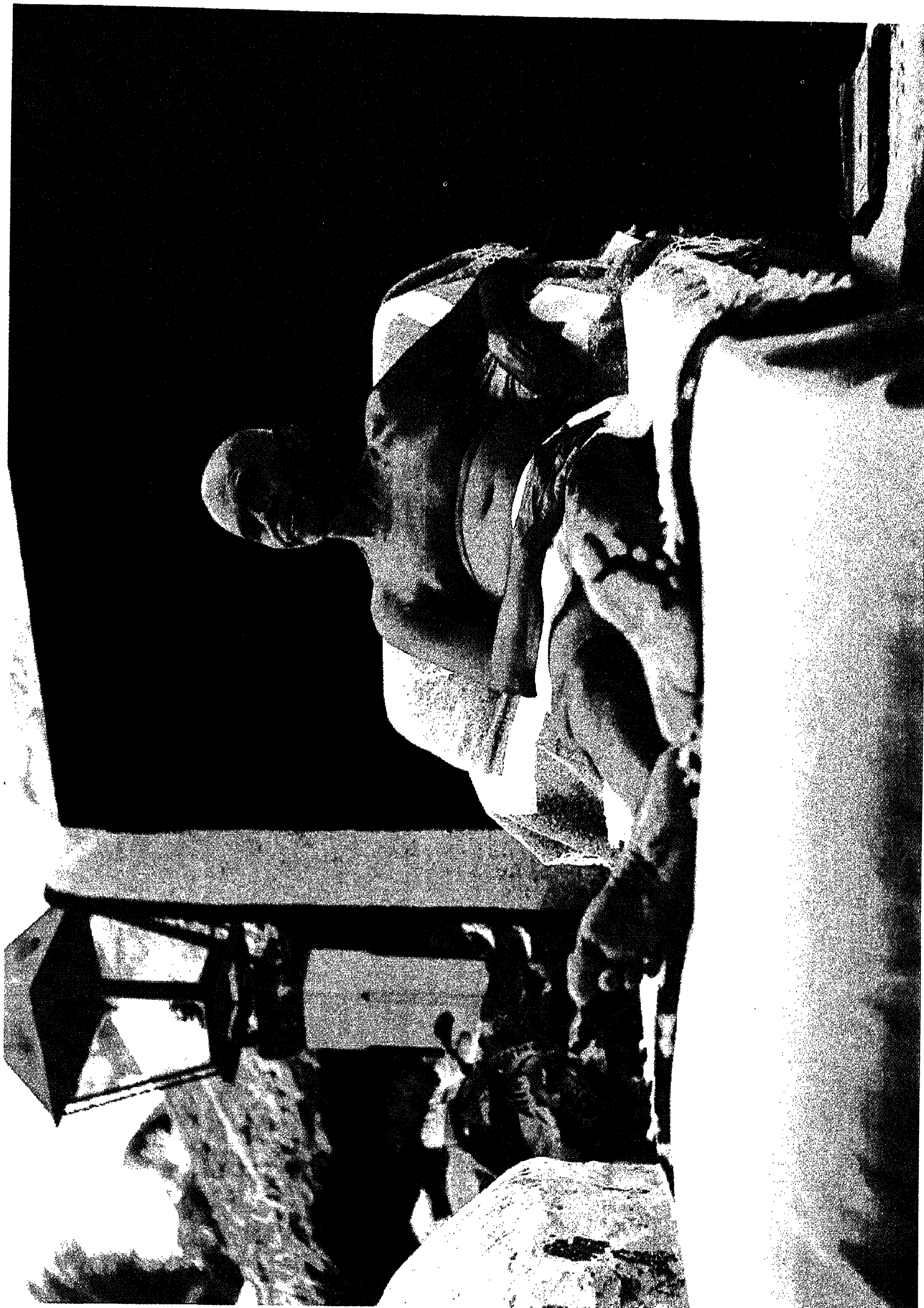
(Call Divine Jan. 1, 1955)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

The elephant in his dream beholds
The lion that wakes him up from sleep,
Just so the seeker, in his dream-like
Waking life of ignorance, sees
The guru and wakes from slumber dark.

Garland of Guru's Sayings Ver. 283





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RIPENESS

Bharatananda

The burning regret which many, probably, share with me, is that full advantage was not taken of those happy and precious days when He was with us physically also - eating, talking, laughing, welcoming all, open to all. Reality was there - in abundance and for the taking, but we enclosed ourselves in timidity, in false humility, in self-deprecation and false excuses. We took a cupful when the ocean was at our hand.

Now He is still with us, but no longer so easily accessible. To find Him again we must overcome the very obstacles which prevented us from seeing Him as He was and going with Him where He wanted to take us. It was fear and desire that stood in the way - the desire for the pleasure of the past and fear of austere responsibility of a higher state of being. It was the same old story - the threshold of maturity of mind and heart which most of us refuse to cross. 'Ripeness is all', He used to say - and now ripeness is the condition of finding Him again.

We ripen when we refuse to drift, when striving ceaselessly becomes a way of life, when dispassion born of insight becomes spontaneous. When the search WHO AM I? becomes a mere torch and the flame all - important, it will mean that we are ripening fast. We cannot accelerate that ripening - but we can remove the obstacles of fear and greed, indolence and fancy, prejudice and pride. He is there and waiting - timelessly. It is we who keep Him waiting.

(The Mountain Path , April 1976)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

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Since one's own past effort it is
That has ripened into fate,
One can with greater present effort
Change one's fate.

Garland of Guru's Sayings Ver. 692

MAHARSHI - THE ETERNAL GURU

A.R.Natarajan

A little indepth study of Bhagavan Ramana's works can and should make one see the place of bhakti, devotion, in His teachings. It would not take long to recognise that surrender to the Sadguru has a pride of place in his teachings and it is devotion at its best. One can also come to understand the holistic nature of Bhagavan's teachings by practising his method for one is linked from the beginning to the Self, to Consciousness and Bliss.

The problem arises because one looks upon the Sadguru's body not the way He looks but the way one looks upon one's own body. We identify ourselves with our bodies which we know are perishable. We transpose this idea on the Sadguru. We identify him with His body, and therefore treat him too as perishable. The physical ending is taken to be a full stop. However, the Sadguru is always aware that He is the Self, which includes His body. He never limits himself by identifying Himself with His body. In fact the very purpose of his birth is to break this illusion by constantly drawing attention to one's true nature by providing seekers of truth with a path which would enable them to be free of this identification.

Bhagavan Ramana exemplified during his last illness, his attitude to the disease racking the body. This opened the eyes of the devotees as to what should be the correct attitude towards his body. In his 'Guru Ramana' under the date 20th April 1949, Cohen records as follows "A lady devotee wept much and went to him in tears and said 'Bhagavan, you who are curing others must cure yourself and spare your life for us your devotees'. Once or twice he waved her off but seeing her great concern he said 'Why are you so much attached to the body? Let it go'." Even more telling is his firm reply to the surgeons who wanted to amputate his left arm, to save his life. 'Let the disease take its own course'. The entry against 1st May 1949 is so poignant and significant that it is extracted here: "Dr.Raghavachari, the surgeon, advised the use of radium first. Today, however, he found amputation unavoidable and at 4-45 p.m. he saw Sri Maharshi alone in the bath-room and told him: "I want to be frank with Bhagavan, so that He may know the real position from the medical point of view and direct us. There are two ways of finishing this case: the first is scooping out the flesh right down to the bone, which will

render that hand practically unusable. The other is surer and safer, namely, amputation of the whole left arm from the shoulder. It is now for Bhagavan to decide". Maharshi paused for a few seconds and replied: " As I let you look after your body, you will please let me look after mine." which made one or two devotees standing within earshot go aside and sob, for they felt that this decision of his amounted to a death sentence. Maharshi then walked back to the hall with supreme indifference."

Though Bhagavan Ramana assumed a body as a part of divine drama he was always the bodiless Self, eternal and unchanging. Even in the early years of this century Bhagavan Ramana revealed this through the vision he bestowed on a devotee Raghavachari. This has been recorded by Narasimha Swami in the biography of Bhagavan Ramana, 'SELF-REALISATION'. The questions Raghavachari wished to pose included the following. "Will you please enable me to see your real form if I am eligible to see it"? What happened is best reported in his own words. "My second question also being thus anticipated, I waited with eager mind for the third. After half an hour, I opened my mouth and said, 'Just as Arjuna wished to see the form of Sri Krishna and asked for darshan, I wish to have a darshan of your real form, if I am eligible'. He was then seated on the pial [porch] with a picture of Dakshinamurthi painted on the wall next to him. He silently gazed on as usual and I gazed into his eyes. Then his body and also the picture of Dakshinamurthi disappeared from my view. There was only empty space, without even a wall, before my eyes. Then followed a whitish cloud in the outline of the Maharshi and of Dakshinamurthi, formed before my eyes. Gradually the outline [with silvery lines] of these figures appeared. Then eyes, nose etc., other details were outlined in lightning-like lines. These gradually broadened till the whole figure of the Swami and Dakshinamurthi became ablaze with very strong and unendurable light. I closed my eyes in consequence. I waited a few minutes and then saw him and Dakshinamurthi in the usual form. I prostrated and came away. For a month thereafter I did not dare to go near him, so great was the impression the above experience made on me. After a month, I went up and saw him standing in front of the Skandasramam. I told him 'I had a question to put to you a month back and I had this experience,' narrating the above experience to him. I requested him to explain it. Then, after a pause he said, 'You wanted to see my form. You saw my disappearance. I am formless. So that experience might be the real truth. The further visions may be according to your own conceptions derived from the study of

the Bhagavad Gita. But Ganapati Sastri had a similar experience and you may consult him.' I did not in fact consult Sastri. After this Maharshi told me to find out who 'I' was - the Seer or Thinker - and his place." One must emphasise again and again the words of Ramana. "You wanted to see my form, you saw my disappearance. I am formless". Formless indeed for he is verily the Self.

This takes one back to the years when Bhagavan Ramana was staying in the Virupaksha cave on Arunachala hill. His radiance was so dazzling that all other yogis and sanyasins also residing on the Hill were curious to know who he really was. No ordinary mortal could have such compelling grandeur and beauty. So they thought . One of them Amritanatha Yati wished to know which great Hindu God was he. Was he Hari [Vishnu the preserver], Sivaguru [Subrahmanya] or Siva [the great yogi]. Ramana who would seldom even give a glimpse of his true stature somehow chose to reply. It reads

"In the Hearts of all, beginning with Vishnu there shines as pure intellect, the Supreme Self Who is the same as Arunachala Ramana." Where then can there be a question of birth and death for such a one? He is the ancient one, the timeless one, for he is the fullness of consciousness.

If one asserts the timelessness of Bhagavan Ramana and the availability of his continuous guidance to all true seekers even now, one is entitled to ask for proof, evidence for the basis for such an assertion. Here one can look at the two-fold aspect of a Jnani.One is his boon giving, wish fulfilling aspect. In 'RAMANA GITA', Bhagavan declares that a jnani has the power to grant prayers, fulfill desires etc., in the same way as Iswara, God. This power was very much there in Him when he was in the body. Whatever be the matter which was brought to his notice, be it sickness of family members or marriage of daughters or jobs for relatives and so on, divine action would automatically start which would result in the wish being satisfied. Reminiscences of old devotees particularly Subbaramayya and Devaraja Mudaliar mention several such instances. The question would arise whether these powers of Bhagavan Ramana are still operative even after His Mahanirvana in 1950. Yes. It is very much operative even now. The post Nirvana miracles are just as many and are multiplying day by day.

The Second aspect of a Jnani is his timelessness in the role of a Sadguru.

Here one should also pause and examine the nature of the relationship between the Sadguru and his disciples. Quite obviously the spiritual evolution, the ripening of each individual varies. The Sadguru who has a sure hand on the spiritual pulse of his disciples, never forces the pace. He is a past-master in the perfection of timing. Using Bhagavan's analogy, like a spider which draws the insect into its web to feed at its own time, the Sadguru who destroys one's ego does so at the right time which might extend over lifetimes. Hence while talking about the guru's grace Bhagavan Ramana would sometimes refer to a passage in the Tamil Vedantic Text *"Kaivalya Navaneetam"* which reads " Oh guru! You have been always with me through several births ordering my course until I was liberated".

One might also refer to the incident relating to a long time inmate of Sri Ramanasramam, Major Chadwick. One night in Bhagavan's Hall there was some talk about reincarnation just as Ramana was getting up from the couch for dinner. Chadwick remarked "Alan Chadwick was not born before "[meaning with the same identity]. Someone wrongly interpreted it. Responding to it Bhagavan quickly replied "Oh yes, he has been, for what has brought us here again?" The disciple's ego, Ramana's prey will never escape his tiger-like grip. But when it will be chewed up cannot be predicted. The relationship is a continuing one. The death of the disciple or his rebirth makes no difference, for the guru is eternal.

In considering whether there is the continued presence of Bhagavan Ramana as guru one has to keep in mind the role of the guru. He 'pushes' the disciple within by 'initiation' which traditionally takes one of three forms- by touch, by look, and by thought. While in the body Bhagavan Ramana used to initiate people through his piercing look of grace. One would be submerged into the peace which pervades when the mind is in-turned. To one pre-Nirvana devotee Bhagavan Ramana more or less indicated that this was the method of initiation. Louiz Hartz records the experience he had when he visited Ramanasramam on the way to Siam. It reads "Suddenly the Maharshi looked at me with great intensity. His eyes took possession of me. I don't know how long it lasted but I felt happy ... In the afternoon I said "Bhagavan I want your initiation." And he replied "You have it already."

In the post-Nirvana years this initiation through eyes is specially being done by Bhagavan Ramana through his photographs which communicate a

world of meaning. One has to remember in this context that the photographs of Bhagavan are not mere photographs but are full of life and capable of transmitting this power of initiation by look. Once a little devotion is kindled in one's heart for Bhagavan Ramana and his way it would work wonders. Sometimes stern, sometimes gentle, sometimes smiling but always radiantly focussing the power of the Self these 'live' photographs instantly draw one by their compelling attraction. This attraction was there even when He was in the body as is narrated by a Polish devotee who in an account of the pre-second world war days says "I met him in a book shop opening a book at random - Ramana Maharshi .... On the way home I opened the book several times - to be sure that I was not dreaming, that this picture is as beautiful as when I saw him first. I look in sideways as if on the sly - afraid to frighten off the beauty, to lose it irretrievably." Several decades later in the 1970s a similar experience happened to one who had not the faintest idea about Ramana and his teachings.

In Texas, U.S.A., a person was moving from one business engagement to another, when he was compelled by an inexplicable force to go to a particular book-shop, look at a particular shelf, and pick up a particular book. On opening it he was overwhelmed by the photo of Bhagavan Ramana gazing directly at him. Instant Samadhi and merger in the Heart followed. Does it not suffice to highlight the power of Bhagavan Ramana to initiate by look which has not reduced even a wee-bit?

There is also enough testimony for his guidance across the world through an inner voice, dreams and awareness of his presence. In 1975, Ursulla Muller was once plagued by heightening of sensate thoughts. "Ramana Maharshi advised me how to behave and told me to simply drop all thinking. I succeeded in following his advice and was surprised how marvellously it worked. By his grace, I was able to forget the whole episode quite quickly." Soon while standing with Bhagavan Ramana's picture in her hand, she heard him say in her heart " All bondage is thought alone." A year later in 1976, Bhagavan advised her "to drop concentration on the 'Anahata Chakra' and go on by silence only'.

We have also the case of Fred Broumand. "Maharshi's grace was revealed to him in a series of dreams and internal responses to some important questions during waking hours. "There has never been a day when he is

apart from me, but then how could he? He is the real Self that abides in my heart."

While a seeker Daley was standing in a bus stop queue he felt the strong physical presence of Bhagavan Ramana which awakened the awareness of the 'I' current in him. Ramana also counselled him through dreams which were quite different from ordinary dreams, which are only mental projections, since "direct experience was communicated through them."

One can go on and on for there are more than fifty such heart-warming and clear accounts of Ramana as the Sadguru which the devotees have shared with us through the years from 1964 to 1986 in 'The Mountain Path' published by Sri Ramanasramam. Bhagavan Ramana is always at hand as the Guru, taking the disciples responsibility and leading them on to the wonderland of silence, with firm and timely guidance. Whatever be the reason as to how and why he enters one's life, once he does, all search, ends. His grace envelops and fills every pore of one's being with bliss. The individual, the disciple, is lost in the vastness called Ramana. The mind gets vibrantly silent immersed steadily in the Self.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

-o0o-

Isvaro gururatmeti .... (God is the same as Guru and Self ....). A person begins with dissatisfaction. Not content with the world he seeks satisfaction of desires by prayers to God; his mind is purified; he longs to know God more than to satisfy his carnal desires. Then God's Grace begins to manifest. God takes the form of a Guru and appears to the devotee; teaches him the Truth; purifies the mind by His teachings and contact; the mind gains strength, is able to turn inward; with meditation it is purified yet further, and eventually remains still without the least ripple. That stillness is the Self. The Guru is both exterior and interior. From the exterior he gives a push to the mind to turn inward; from the interior he pulls the mind towards the Self and helps the mind to achieve quietness. That is Grace. Hence there is no difference between God, Guru and Self

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

ARUNACHALA BECKONS ALL

Dennis Hartel

Ocean of Nectar, Full of Grace, engulfing the universe in Thy Splendour! O Aruna-chala, the Supreme Itself! be Thou the Sun and open the lotus of my heart in Bliss.

Five Stanzas to Sri Arunachala

One hundred years ago, on September 1, 1896, a sixteen-year old brahmin boy quietly walked straight into the inner sanctum of the great Arunachala Temple in Tiruvannamalai, South India. "Father, at thy call I have come," was his unspoken, heartfelt utterance. Since that day when Sri Ramana Maharshi made his appearance at the holy Arunachala Mountain, numerous seekers the world over have turned their gaze towards that ancient, holy hill of Light.

Now, forty-six years after the Maharshi cast off his mortal frame, it appears that even greater numbers of seekers from the West are being irresistibly attracted by Him. His teachings are studied, disseminated and practised by citizens of all countries from all walks of life. In my twenty- five years of living and working in an ashram dedicated to the Sage of Arunachala I have observed this increase first hand.

It cannot be attributed to the efforts of any individual or groups propagating the Maharshi's teachings. Sri Ramana Maharshi is a unique powerhouse of peace. His powerful presence is his most striking feature, which even today draws us to him. During his lifetime he did not display occult powers, nor did he raise funds for any cause, lecture on Vedanta or go about making disciples. Rather it was his utter simplicity, transparent love and illumination that pierced even the most crusted hearts of unyielding skeptics. Here is a genuine, towering spiritual personality.

As this decade draws to an end and the panorama of spiritual teachers and teachings of the past century narrows, we find that the Sage of Arunachala is emerging as a dominant force. The spiritual power that he embodied during his lifetime is slowly being realised after his death, and in the next century it will gain momentum, influencing the lives of countless seekers of Truth; and Arunachala will be the center from where this current of spirituality will flow.

Throughout history there have always been a few rare souls whose destiny required them to act as ships, ferrying myriad pilgrims to the other shore. Their influence does not abate with physical death. Their teachings are not buried in their tombs. The Maharshi still floats high on the water of our consciousness, and his power lies not so much in his spoken word recorded in books but in His grace conferred to sincere seekers. It is a grace that opens the Heart and pulls us into It. The wisdom gained by such grace is not knowledge born of thought, but rather wisdom born of intuition when thought ceases and the Self alone remains. Arunachala is the visible form of the Self and also represents the path to the Self as taught and lived by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

The glory of the Arunachala Hill has been sung in scriptures passed down to us from antiquity. The Maharshi gave this meaning of Arunachala:

Aruna = Red, bright like fire.

The fire is not ordinary fire which is only hot.

This is *Jnanagni*(Fire of Wisdom) which is neither hot nor cool.

Achala = a hill.

So it means Hill of Wisdom*.

Arunachala is already one of the oldest and most sacred of all holy places. The Maharshi called it the "Heart of the earth, the spiritual center of the world." Sri Sankara declared it to be Mount Meru. In the *Skanda Purana* we read, "Of all, Arunachala is the most sacred. It is the heart of the world. Know it to be the secret and sacred Heart-center of Siva."

Down through the ages, saints and sages have adorned its caves. And it has been said that even now invisible *Siddhas* (Sages with supernatural powers) dwell in these caves. The Maharshi has confirmed their existence and some have seen them moving as lights upon the hill at night. This hill is considered to be the original Siva Lingam and the story of its origin is found in the *Arunachala Mahatmyam.*

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* *Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi, No. 216*

Devotees of the Maharshi sometimes wondered why he would often refer to Arunachala Mountain as God. Was he not an Advaitin, a non-dualist? This question was put to the Sage by a learned professor, Dr.Syed, and recorded in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi:*

273. Dr.Syed asked: I have been reading the "Five Hymns." I find that the hymns are addressed to Arunachala by you. You are an Advaitin. How do you then address God as a separate Being?

Maharshi: The devotee, God and the hymns are all the Self.

Dr.Syed: But you are addressing God. You are specifying this Arunachala Hill as God.

Maharshi: You can identify the Self with the body. Should not the devotee identify the Self with Arunachala?

Dr.Syed: If Arunachala be the Self why should it be specially picked out among so many other hills? God is everywhere. Why do you specify Him as Arunachala?

Maharshi: What has attracted you from Allahabad to this place? What has attracted all these people around?

Dr.Syed: Sri Bhagavan.

Maharshi: How was I attracted here? By Arunachala. The Power cannot be denied. Again Arunachala is within and not without. The Self is Arunachala.

To further convey the true significance of Arunachala, nothing is more revealing than these hymns Sri Ramana wrote praising the Holy Hill:

"Who is the seer? When I sought within I watched the disappearance of the seer and what survived it. No thought of 'I saw' arose, so how could the thought 'I did not see' arise? Who has the power to convey this in words when even Thou couldst do so in ancient days by silence only (appearing as Dakshinamurti)? Only to convey by silence Thy State Thou standest as a Hill shining from heaven to earth."

- *Eight Stanzas on Sri Arunachala*

The ancient path of Self-enquiry taught by the Maharshi was previously relegated to hermits, far removed from worldly pursuits. What the Maharshi did was to make this path available to all, whether engaged in employment or rearing children, or living within the confines of a monastery. With a period

of meditation each day and vigilant remembrance of the ideal throughout our activities, we can experience the true nature of Arunachala within and without. This is what the Maharshi taught and embodied as a living example. The study of his life is equal to the study of the scriptures, for in his every action the individual self was absent and the Supreme Self shines forth. This rare example in the 20th Century is an unfailing gauge to measure spirituality at its highest plateau, and we should make use of this standard to assess our life in all its varied aspects.

Recited daily before his Samadhi in Tiruvannamalai is this stanza composed by Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni:

Good luck accumulated to the Red Mount, Arunachala, for its having sheltered numerous sages in the past, has now grown incomparable because Lord Ramana Maharshi has chosen this hill among many other holy places, for his abode.

- Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana

The Maharshi never admitted to having 'chosen' Arunachala as his place of residence, but had always expressed being 'chosen by' Arunachala:

Bearing and tending me in the world in the shape of my father and mother, Thou didst abide in my mind, and before I fell into deep sea called Jaganmaya (universal illusion) and was drowned, Thou didst draw me to Thee, Arunachala, Consciousness Itself, such is the wonder of Thy Grace!

- The Necklet of Nine Gems

We also may feel that we have a choice to choose Arunachala, to choose the path of the practise of Self-enquiry, to choose Sri Ramana Maharshi as our ideal, our goal, our Guru. And if we do this with our whole heart and mind, we will also know and experience "Thou didst draw me to Thee. Arunachala, Consciousness Itself, such is the wonder of Thy Grace!"

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

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WHAT THE MAHARSHI MEANS TO ME

J. Jayaraman

If God be the one that does things and lets every one else take the credit, then I cannot imagine a better example of God playing the role of man-playing- God than Sri. Ramana. Here was an entity incarnated, in mortal coil moving as one among us, concerned intimately with each of our concerns and yet simultaneously above it all, much like the mountain remaining at once earth-and-heaven bound.

In his eight-fold form as the Universe, God leaves no Manual for his *amsa* , the hologram, man. Even so, ingrained in one's experience of this world of senses is the possibility of the Seer being intuited while in the evolutionary act of seeing this world. This experience, primal and child-like, a bliss in itself, is a flash in the pan for most of us, only to be overshadowed by the tyranny of *vasanas*, the inner drives towards tasting and acquiring-pelf and power. Rare is the individual for whom this flash of lightning in the spiritual firmament endures, 'freezes' as it were, as continuing noonday brilliance. The Maharshi was such a one. Our knowledge of this deadly incident in his life stems only from his own recounting of it. Any one impressed by the Maharshi's person and life cannot but be struck by his preference for the understatement. Master that he is of the understatement it is not surprising that the Maharshi described his enlightenment as a 'process' of enquiry. But he gives himself away when he narrates that he 'began' the enquiry by stopping breath and not allowing even the word I to escape. An enquiry conducted with such consummation from its very start could occur and proceed only in a mind already *satvic* as space. To me it reveals the mystery of the Maharshi; his supreme understatement regarding his status as supreme master, not only after the 'death-experience', but even prior to it. I am reminded of the occasion when I witnessed a maestro beginning his recital with an exquisite phrase, only to discover to my astonishment that he had only been checking the tuning of his instrument!

The advent of the Maharshi is, to me, to say the least the mysterious embodiment of Self that is Silence that is Space. By his own admission there never was a period of *sadhana* during his life at Arunachala. There was no difference for him between the instantaneous 'death' at sixteen years of

age, little there after, and the excruciating, slow death at seventy one. The gist of his teaching is contained in his teen-age replies to his mother and Sivaprakasam Pillai. There was no evolution in his teaching or the mode of communication till the last breath.

By his own admission he discovered nothing new for the world, had no particular philosophy to expound, no message for the masses. According to him, the Lord was doing an excellent job and it was only necessary for the 'individual to attend to the business for which each one is here'. For the Maharshi instruction could only be on an individual basis and even that could occur only through Silence.

The enquiry 'Who am I?' is not another technique, or even a better technique. For, technique presupposes motive. Rather it is the natural movement, the inevitable Hobson's choice of one confronting one's awareness, one's extinction, in the Now. *Atma Vichara* is therefore not another path, but a passionate engagement with an entity unique in Creation, the feeling 'I' a shadow that is at once subject and object and which exists centrally and solely through a relationship of 'mine' and 'not mine' with everything else in Creation. Whatever be the activity of body and mind, this ego entity tends to rise up at the end of the movement to claim credit. Absent during the movement itself, its arising after is irrelevant to the activity itself. The child in us engaged in activity for no motive other than the joy inherent in such play. Laughter and song and learning was for the joy of laughing, singing and knowing. Grown up, these acquire motive. Our lives are centered around actions which become means to ends which we erroneously presume will secure our control and ownership of joy!

Maharshi says, "Success or failure depends only on *Prarabdha* and not on exercise of will or the absence of it. Equanimity under all circumstances is the exercise of will". The Maharshi's message is a call to take heed of the role played by ego, by its arrogation of 'doership', in nullifying progress be it through the path of Bakthi, Karma, Yoga or Jnana.

The path of Self-knowledge which is central to a final apprehension of the Universe has been extricated from dense overgrowth of technical jargon and illusion, by the Maharshi. Philosophy and Religion, the well meaning and sound custodians of Truth had, become overburdened and made insen-

sitive by feckless growth, become vehicles that seemed to further the very falsehood they sought to negate. It was in such a scenario of a thorough mix up of priorities of cart put before horse in a ridiculous if scientific hunt for the Tenth man, that the Maharshi demonstrated in living example that with ego apprehended all was in proper place and that both the baby and the bath water were a package deal. There was no need to cut down the Tree; the diverging branches of Religion, Ritual, Philosophy and Science were complementary and derived sustenance and sap of meaning and reality from the root I. Without negating any of past traditions, all natural growths relevant to their context in time, the Maharshi put them all in proper perspective for modern man by holding aloft this Torch which must be crucial at any age, at any moment in time. And hold it aloft he did, with dogged, delightful monotone throughout his earthly sojourn.

The Maharshi put to rest much speculation and bandying about the nature and varieties of *samadhi.* Much mystery surrounded the nature of Nirvikalpa Samadhi and its compatibility with daily life. The 'ultimate' experience is widely but erroneously understood to arise when one's mind is fixed in the Sahasrara Lotus Centre within the cranium in the body. It was the Maharshi who pointed out without mincing words, that any *samadhi* ascribed to an area within the body was mental construct, since the body itself was mental construct. Dream experience is sufficient to prove that the 'reality' of a self consciousness within a body which in turn is located within a world, is a mental construct. Mind is nothing but thoughts. Every thought is centered around 'I'. The I issues from the heart. The Heart is thus transcendental, beyond location. The Maharshi's reference to the Heart on the right side is a concession along the path, much as the reflection in water pointed out, to someone looking below for the Sun.

The Maharshi is modern proof of the utter possibility of continuous advaitic experience being consistent with worldly activity. Vasishta's instruction to Rama (in the verses from Yoga Vasishta included by the Maharshi in his *Forty Verses Supplement*) urges him to feign initiative, exhilaration and anxiety during the performance of his role as king, while ever sporting as the Heart, witnessing the drama of the waking, dreaming and deep sleep of the ego.

It was the Maharshi who gave living meaning to the forgotten word Sa-

haja Nirvikalpa Samadhi; the effortless inherence of the ego in the Heart. The Maharshi is the unique example in modern times of the possibility within the reach of all, of living an utterly normal life with body, sense and mind, all active and yet remaining transcendent; of a life where nothing need be rejected except the phantom ego. His own life demonstrates, contrary to current consumeristic cliches about the necessity of ego for drive and achievement, that abundant lasting and wholesome work gets done through one who dissolves ego and with it personal petty initiative.

The Maharshi is unique in his non-proclamation of any purpose behind his advent. A child among children, a prince among beggars, and monarch among kings, the Maharshi's laser gaze of Silence made sturdy questioners stand in awe, dissolving them along with all their questions. His answers, are direct, free from fine print and so complete in themselves as to be largely independent of the need to be studied in context. He sought no disciples, yet the world is increasingly drawn to Him.

Sri Bhagavan was most casual about the miracles (of relief from bodily distress or worldly anxiety) that were constantly happening to those who reached out for succour to a seemingly unresponsible Maharshi. Raising the dead, appearing in two places etc are all recorded. With child like innocence coupled with bubbling banter he related to others in the hall, of such miracles as were credited to him by the beneficiaries. He held that Christ and Krishna did not 'perform' miracles. Such happenings the Maharshi said, were automatic in the presence of the realized one. To the sage every incident is a miracle of coincidence. He is at once Lord and Lover, Actor and Audience, Will and Circumstance.

In the absence of a mission, the Maharshi needed no middle men. In the absence of the ego the Maharshi needed no hours of privacy, to be 'himself'. He was the same, whether alone, or attended upon or amidst a crowd. He was thus accessible to all creatures, man and beast, at all times of day and night during his entire life at Arunachala. Extraordinary in being so utterly ordinary, he is unattainable in being so utterly normal as to lack even those harmless mechanisms and quirks of behaviour of body and speech adopted by all of us, great and small. Merciless even from youth as he showed himself to be towards 'his' ego, he remains an enigma through the abundance of consideration and complete non-violence he showed in his relationship with others, lest 'their' ego should be hurt! Lasting change, he said, could only occur from within.

The Maharshi a master cook, calligraphist and caricaturist, and naturopath, raconteur, editor, and engineer extraordinaire, spoke little and wrote even less. His poems in Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam are not only mystic and magnificent *mantras*, but also potent seeds sown for the integration of a people who are presently so asleep as to consider as weakness the timeless strength inherent in the bewildering bewitching diversity of their culture.

The Maharshi is the ultimate 'outer' guru Dakshinamurthi, going as he does out of his way to make the disciple self-reliant. The Maharshi is also the ultimate 'inner' guru shining as he does within, shedding light, through the window I, without.

When the ego has a petty life of its own, inner will is pitted against outer circumstance. When the ego, in dissolving, embraces all, universal Will operates as universal Circumstance.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

If you surrender yourself to the Higher Power all is well. That Power sees your affairs through. Only so long as you think that you are the worker you are obliged to reap the fruits of your actions. If on the other hand, you surrender yourself and recognise your individual self as only a tool of the Higher Power, that Power will take over your affairs along with the fruits of actions. You are no longer affected by them and the work goes on unhampered. Whether you recognise the Power or not the scheme of things does not alter. Only there is a change of outlook. Why should you bear your load on the head when you are travelling in a train? It carries you and your load whether the load is on your head or on the floor of the train. You are not lessening the burden of the train by keeping it on your head but only straining yourself unnecessarily. Similar is the sense of doership in the world by the individuals.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

ARUNACHALA

Meredith Starr

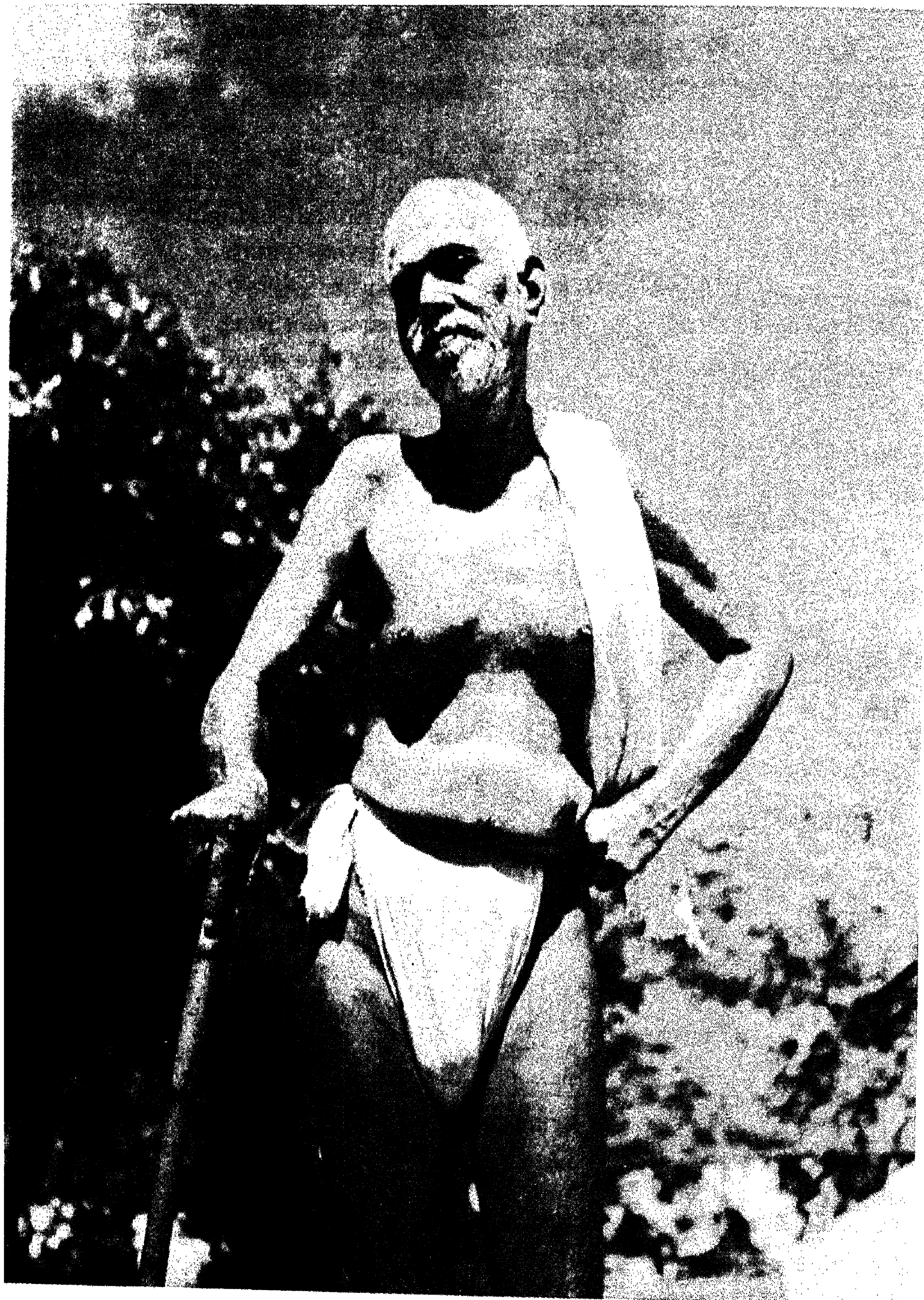
Arunachala! When I name
Thee, all the world dissolves in flame,
And, charioted by Boundless Light,
My consciousness grows infinite.
The power of this word Divine
Turns the law's water into wine,
And he who sips one drop thereof,
He will be filled with Boundless Love.
As if his heart became the sky
Beyond imagination high
And wide beyond conception, where
He dances in the buoyant air
In bliss surpassing all we find
Within the precincts of the mind.

Arunachala! He who knows
Thy Grace is armed against all woes.
Rivers of light flow from his eyes;
His life is vaster than the skies,
Embracing all, excluding none
And making no comparison
Between the lesser and the great,
But just to all. Inviolate,
As light itself, he beams on all
Who in their grief upon him call.
Arunachala! Grant, I pray,
Thy Grace to guide me lest I stray.
Arunachala! Hear my plea!
Then shall my life grow one with thee.

(Call Divine Dec. 1, 1955)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–



The only photograph of Bhagavan,
circa late 1940s

BHAGAVAN'S PHOTOGRAPHS: WRITTEN IN LIGHT

Dev Gogoi

When the ancient Chinese sage observed that one picture is worth a thousand words, he was right. When photography was born less than two hundred years ago - still yet so young - collective wisdom drew from the equally classical Greek to name her, quite literally, "Writing with Light".

Today, forty six years after Sri Ramana Maharshi's *mahasamadhi* and a century after he quit school and home, we are left with, among other ineffable blessings, his photographs. In a language more direct than speech, silently in the light, he speaks. Every individual will have his or her favourite image. Whichever it may be, Bhagavan appears alive - powerfully present, full of compassion, totally understanding, radiating an all-embracing wisdom, peace and love.

How many of these wondrous artefacts survive? Most of the original negatives were lost in a fire. A current serial numbering takes us to over five hundred separate images. This is a selection of 'good ones' chosen from the rest which are 'not so good'. If one were to count every single negative, as well as photographs and halftone reproductions for which negatives are no longer available, and include the bad and indifferent - yes, there are those which are out-of-focus, over-exposed or under-exposed, too dense or too thin, or irreparably damaged - the total figure would perhaps be close to a thousand extant images. Not a very large figure.

A drop in the ocean, nonetheless infinitely precious. Consider this industry statistic, slightly mellowed with age, without a pang of existentialist angst, if you can: the estimated number of exposures made in the United States alone in 1988 was 15.46 billion. Add the rest of the planet. Again add guesstimates for as many as you care to contemplate. That's a very large total. Everybody happy? Yes! And we're still shooting, fast as we can see them.

This magical child, born of Sun and Earth, light and elements, capturing the quicksilver moment in silver itself, inextricably interweaving technology

and artistry, machinery and meditation, holds also the keys to the heavenly kingdom. Like the Japanese who find the Way in drinking tea, sitting, writing, painting, sword-making or fighting, photography too opens the door.

The American photographer Paul Caponigro expressed his belief that "the process should involve not just the chemical but also the alchemical, linking the photographic tradition to the greater tradition of calling forth a higher consciousness. In the end, tools and materials must allow access to the inner realm of awareness which alone is capable of transcending preconceptions. Techniques are essential, but their use is in assisting to liberate an attention that is above the intellect.

"Through receptivity and communion, one can open to a higher consciousness, remembering that this quiet inner attention is a most precious energy which can be used throughout the total process. Recording the light of the other subject can be linked with gaining access to one's inner light."

The earliest surviving photograph of Bhagavan is dated *circa* 1900, when he was about 21 years old. He's sitting in the easy posture, looking directly, piercingly, at the camera. Dense head of hair, jet black; body long-limbed and lithe, fingernails grown rather long. Behind him is the bare rock and a triangular niche in the partly plastered wall of the Mango Tree Cave. Photographer unknown. Not too long out of 24-hour *samadhi*, this youth. No, he's still in *samadhi*. God! Looks like all heaven has broken loose. Why didn't the glass plate, the lens, the camera, the photographer shatter and disintegrate into a blizzard of elementary particles? It's a miracle.

On one occasion, when Bhagavan was talking about his days before coming to Arunachala, he mentioned that he had been photographed with his uncle, but that the photograph had since been lost. On April 20, 1949, when some people wanted to know the year in which Bhagavan's first photograph at Tiruvannamalai was taken, he replied, "It was taken four years after my coming, in 1900."

There are a handful of portraits and group photographs from the early pre-1922 period. Whether alone or surrounded by devotees, Bhagavan appears distinguished by the aura of absence from this world. These formal moments, frozen from a daily flux hard to imagine in its particularities, are also stamped by a strong cultural and geographic specificity. In the obscure

interior of South India, at the heart of the Tamil tradition, something had happened. Something was happening. Like pictures from the Wild West, notwithstanding the verisimilitude of the visual record, the reality was vaster than the lens which strove to capture it.

The oldest original negative in the Ashram's possession is a glass plate, 14 cm by 20 cm, showing Bhagavan and his devotees at Virupaksha Cave in 1911. It is in good condition. There are 28 persons in the photograph. The photographer must have taken the good part of an hour, or half, to set everything up, get everybody into position, and make his exposure. Large view cameras can be cumbersome to handle. The image on the groundglass appears upside-down and laterally reversed, and is visible only in the dark, which is why the hapless photographer must peer at it under a light proof hood. All of which can cause the subject - audience to move from curiosity to impatience to ruthful humour to you-know-who's expense.

Bhagavan at Skandasramam, circa 1916 - 1922





Devotees and Three dogs with Bhagavan: an extremely faded rare print, computer enhanced by V. Karthik

The crowning moment, the moment of exposure (phew! At last!), could actually last a second or two. Emulsions were slow and the aperture usually stopped down. Opening the shutter was sometimes a matter of manually removing the lens cap, deftly describing a circle or two with it in the air to one side, and then swiftly recapping the lens, all in one fluid motion. Simultaneously, an eagle-eye was fixed on the subjects to detect any errant movement. Despite raising a warning forefinger and a dire "Steady please!", it's surprising to discover how even adults cannot sit still for a second. Photographers tend to take an extra shot for assurance. In all the glass-negative pictures which include children, their faces are blurred. Something else must have caught their eye.

The photographs of that era were the same size as the glass negatives themselves. Prints were made by tightly sandwiching the negative (emulsion side down) on printing-out-paper (emulsion side up) in a wood-and-glass contact-printing frame and exposing it in sunlight. Exposure times could range from several minutes on a bright sunny day to an hour if it was cloudy. Periodically, the progress of development was checked by opening one half of the hinged back of the printing frame - the other half still securely maintining negative-paper registration - to directly view the emerging image. When complete, the paper was fixed and toned in chemical baths for permanence. Sometimes, in the trade, unfixed proof prints were given free to customers for approval. If the recipient were tempted to keep it for nothing, instead of ordering final prints, he would discover that the image disappeared with some rapidity!

PoP prints exhibit a richness and depth of tonality unmatched by modern photographic papers. Even the softest grade of today's papers can be too fast and contrasty to capture the full tonal range inherent in a vintage glass negative. A roundedness and subtle gradations - *information* - can be lost. Luckily, there is one company still manufacturing quality printing-out-paper, giving us the opportunity to fully realise our photographic legacy. Working with this material is to be transported to a mellower era, prior to the plethora of equipment entailed by a darkroom, enlargers, lenses - even electricity itself. It an environment where power failures are endemic, it feels refreshingly free to be connected directly to the sun.

Soon after Bhagavan came down from the Hill to live by his mother's samadhi in 1922, somebody made what looks like a casual snapshot. A rare and precious view of what was then a barren wasteland and upon which Ramanasramam grew into being. The Mother's Shrine, a simple coconut-thatched shed, is visible in the left background. In the right background, Bhagavan is seen standing in a relaxed posture, reading something he is holding in his hands. In the middle distance, the lower reaches of Arunachala rise bereft of trees. Our original of this image is a tiny 4 cm x 8 cm print, yellow with age. A helpful writer has captioned it in ink, upon the image area, *The Maharshi and his Hermitage.*

There are two other prints like this one; the three obviously belong together. One of them is a view of the thatched sheds that made up the Ashram.

There are two figures in the picture. One standing, the other squatting on the ground; it is not possible to identify them. The third print is playful and intriguing. It shows somebody floating on his back in water, face and hands bobbing above the surface. He could be smiling. Is it Bhagavan, enjoying a swim in Pali Tirtam? It will remain forever an unconfirmable possibility - no helpful caption-writer here - though some devotees may dearly love to believe so.

Through the 1920s and upto the early 1930s, it seems as if Bhagavan and his devotees were photographed with some regularity in formal group portraits. Everybody is stiff, sitting or standing in rows, looking directly at the camera. Bhagavan shines throughout, the utterly ordinary yet extraordinary centerpiece of every session. There are no candid photographs that we know of from this period.

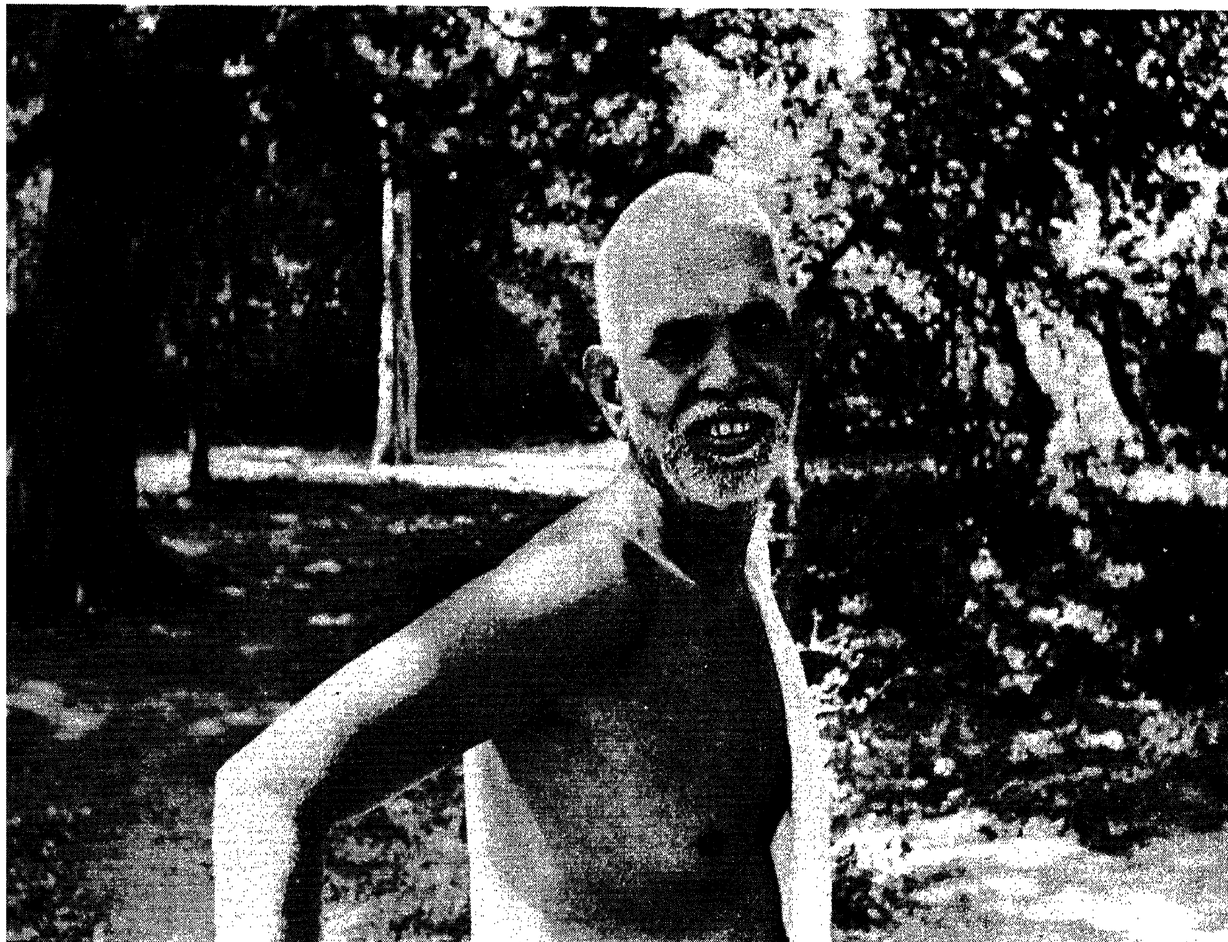
From the mid - 1930s and throughout the 1940s, Bhagavan was photographed with increasing frequency. Perhaps this is a reflection of the introduction and greater availability of roll-film, hand-held cameras. Or it could be a simple parallel to the swelling flow of devotees who came for his *darshan*, his presence, and his grace.

Most of the negatives which survive belong to this period; the bulk of them are 2 1/4" square format, while a few are 2 1/4" x 3 1/4" or slightly larger. There is only one printable 35 mm negative, a single frame cut away from the rest of the roll, in the Ashram archives. It is a back view of Bhagavan as he is walking up the Hill, taken from up close. The photographer was a pace behind him, and probably shot it on the run. Despite the unlikely perspective and arbitrary composition, there is nevertheless a strong sense of movement and immediacy, with the implied thrill of having been present here and then. What would we have done, how would we have felt, striding behind Bhagavan on the mountain path? And, on the material level, what else was on that roll of film that has vanished?

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami, the then official photographer of the Ashram, who expressed his devotion to the Sage in this way, and to his heirs who freely donated their father's negatives to the Ashram. "Owing to my busy life in Madras", he wrote in 1967, "I could usually spend only a day or a part of the day at Tiruvannamalai when I went

there. I always took my camera with me and I used to spend the whole time with the Maharshi and take as many photos of him as I could. I was afraid he would get annoyed at my persistence, but he never did. I have photographed him walking, sitting, eating, wiping his feet. I have caught him smiling and laughing, speaking and silent, and also in samadhi. Once he was going up the Hill when it started to rain and he was offered a home-made palm-leaf umbrella and I snapped him using it. I took another picture of him using an ordinary umbrella and smiling broadly as he did so.

Sometimes I used to wonder if it was not ridiculous of me to pay so much attention to photography when his teaching was that "I am not the body". Was I not chasing the shadow and even trying to perpetuate it? At the time I paid very little attention to his teaching. I was attracted only by the beauty and grace of his person. It gave me immense pleasure to take pictures of him. He was more important than his teaching.



Bhagavan in Palakottu: photographed by Ella Maillart, circa 1940s

Later, when he was no longer bodily with us, I turned to his teaching; and then I found that the Grace of His Presence had prepared me for it. I had been attracted to him as a child is to its mother, without knowing why, and I had derived sustenance from him as a child does from its mother. I was glad afterwards that I had enjoyed his Presence so fully when he was bodily with us. His teaching pulsated with life. I began to understand it and it mixed with my being and became my own."

P.R.S. Mani also photographed Bhagavan. One particular portrait by him became very popular in its time. It was referred to as the "Mani bust". It is a tight head shot; Bhagavan's hair is not yet four weeks long and he is smiling; a handsome face. It is the eyes which are arresting, jet black and fathomless, like whirlpools pulling one into the Self.

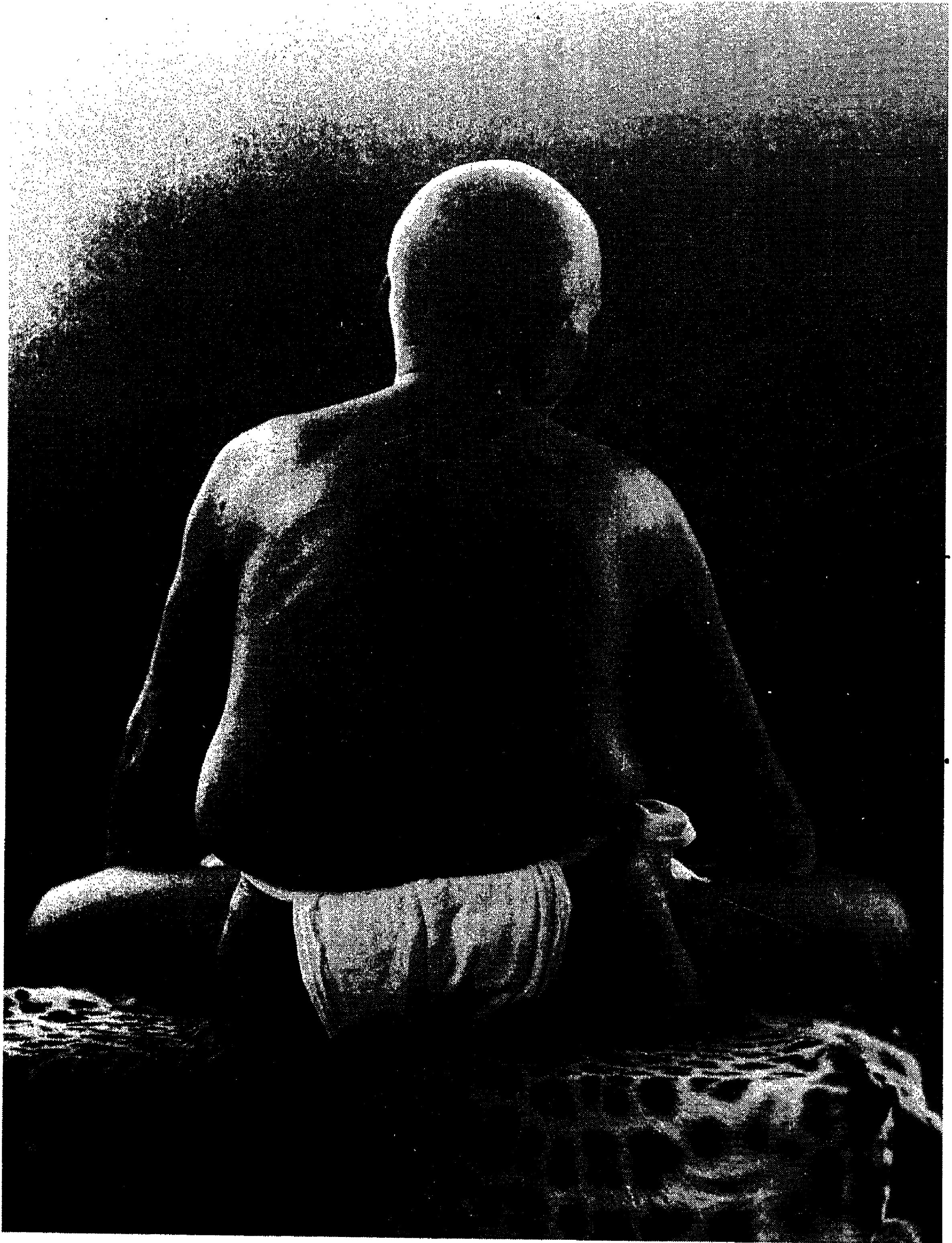


Loving hand: Bhagavan with visitor (from the Mees album).

G.G.Welling, the professional photographer from Bangalore and Belgaum, took what is perhaps the finest series of pictures of Bhagavan. There are only nine or ten of them. Each is marked by great elegance, simplicity and beauty, as distinctive as a signature. The props are minimal: a plain, dark background; walking stick; tigerskin and rugs. And Bhagavan himself filling the frame. He is at his most beautiful physically, silver hair not yet sacrificied to the barber's razor (as it was every full-moon). It was a perfect meeting of photographer and subject. While a careful attempt to record Bhagavan's voice resulted in an inexplicable failure - the pristine silence, on the other hand, was faithfully captured - he was extremely cooperative in front of the camera, as obedient as a dutiful child, as solicitous as a doting parent.

When Welling was about to take his pictures, Bhagavan asked if there was sufficient light. Mr. Welling said, "Bhagavan, you are the light". Later, Welling presented Bhagavan with the results of his work in the shape of a hefty photo album, measuring 11.5" x 15" and more than 1.5" thick. It contained his portraits of Bhagavan, his sister Alamelu and Chinnaswami (both of which are framed and displayed in the Ashram dining hall), and views of Tiruvannamalai, including a study of the various shrines and gopurams in the Big Temple. They are all tidy compositions, clear and straightforward, and executed with a technical mastery that is amply evident in the warm-toned prints. His depiction of Bhagavan called the Welling bust - there are two of them, one tilted, the other straight - have become the universal favourite of devotees throughout the world.

There are other albums. One of them was presented to Bhagavan by Dr. Mees, the Dutch scholar of comparative religion. The dedication reads: 'To Sri Ramana Maharshi, in Silence offered, as the only fit expression of love and oneness, by Gualtheurs Hendrik Mees, or rather: "Sastri".' It is dated January 28th, 1936, and beautifully handwritten in white on the dark brown inside cover of the album. It measures 19 cm x 27 cm, containing four slip-in snapshots per page, mostly 2 1/4" x 3 1/4" in size. There are 25 pages, a fascinating treasure trove of visual delights. Some of the pictures are familiar, others quite uncommon, of Bhagavan, his devotees, the Ashram, the Mountain, the Big Temple, and other shrines around Tiruvannamalai. It's a fair guess that a good number, if not most, of these pictures were photographed by Dr. Mess himself.



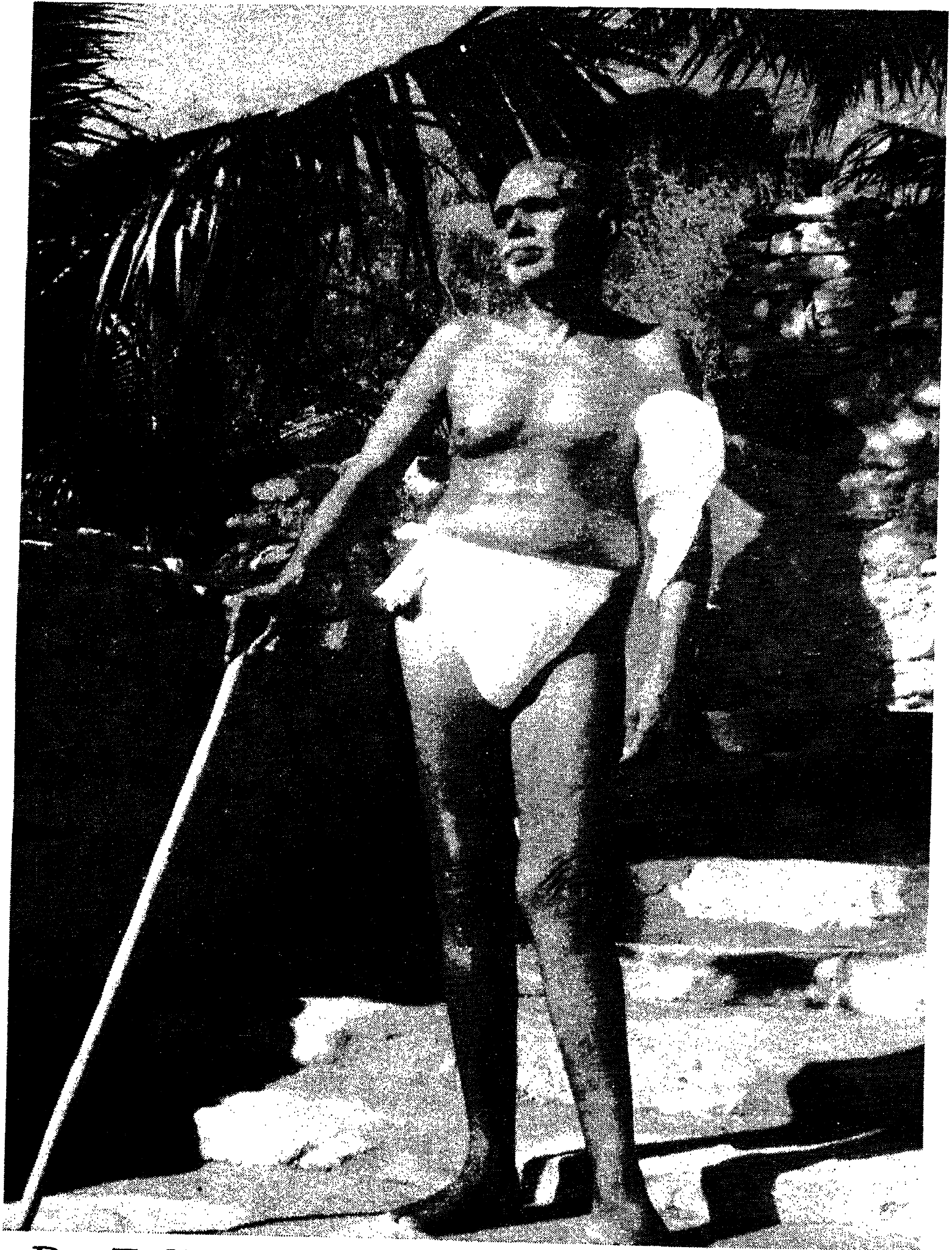
Reference photograph for sculptor: a study in pure form.

Bhagavan is superbly portrayed. Some of the studies are quite striking and the group photographs have a friendly, informal feel. There is a very sweet shot of Cow Lakshmi with her calf; a squirrel perched atop Bhagavan's upraised left hand, a well-lit interior view of the Mother's shrine, walls covered with framed pictures, a windblown, young-looking Chadwick standing high on the slopes of Arunachala with two other devotees; Paul Brunton (Raphael Hurst) dapper in trimmed moustache, bow-tie, white belt and matching shoes; the Big Temple rising in solitary splendour from a wide plain, a scattering of houses clustered around it; the Ramanasramam Book-Depot while it was still a thatched shed; the caparisoned temple elephant ambling through the streets of Tiruvannamalai on a festival day. And so on.

A smaller album, 11 cm x 15 cm, is entitled "Bhagavan Goes to Skandasramam". It is the work of Dr. T.N.K., a rare survivor of the many albums that he must have made for Bhagavan, recording Bhagavan's visit to Skandasramam in December 1945. It contains 41 photos, 38 of them 2 1/4" square contact prints. The negatives for almost all of them are not available. Bhagavan is seen posing on the mountain path, passing through the arched iron entranceway at Skandasramam; taking his leisure on a couch placed in front of the building; reading the papers; laughing; surrounded by devotees; wrapped head to foot in a large white shawl with a wide printed border; standing in dappled sunlight against the rockface by the spring above the kitchen. There is one in which he looks especially luminous, standing at the entrance to the ashram, his body gleaming in the angled morning light.

There is only one colour photograph of Bhagavan that we know of, an 8" x 10" print on Fuji colour paper, a straight low-angled shot of Bhagavan standing outdoors with trees and the Mountain in the background. It is a close-up, and judging by Bhagavan's body, taken in the late 1940s, before the cancer struck. Bhagavan is leaning on a cane in his right hand, and a white towel is casually draped over his right shoulder, his left arm resting on his hip. The shadows indicate that the time is about noon. The colours are washed out. It looks more like a monochromatic picture in hues of reddish brown. The print is probably of fairly recent origin: more likely the colour dyes in the negative have faded.

LIFE magazine, issue dated May 30, 1949, devoted a lavish eleven pages to an article on Bhagavan entitled HOLY MAN: *Sri Ramana Maharshi has India's answer to most of man's problems* by Winthrop Sargeant. It was



Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami: "It gave me immense pleasure to take picture of him. He was more important than his teaching"

the heyday of magazine photo journalism, when globe trotting writers and photographers brought the excitement of the outer world into the homes of the affluent, rather like what the satellite TV does today.

Sargeant reported: "Sri Ramana would have looked like a superior human being in any surroundings. He had the quietly assured look of a man who has experienced a great deal and thought everything through to a final, unshakable conclusion. Even a unbeliever could see that he possessed a sort of personal serenity that is rare even in the contemplative Orient. I mumbled a few words of greeting which I hoped were appropriate and was smilingly waved to a place on the floor. The Maharshi spoke very little, sometimes in English, sometimes in the Tamil language which a considerable part of his audience did not understand. But that did not seem to matter. 'You can attain peace merely by being near him', the professor of English literature explained later."

The article is sumptuously illustrated by LIFE staff photographer Eliot Elisofon. There are eleven black-and-white photographs, full of punch, in typical LIFE style. Copies of this issue and some of Elisofons photographs, glossy 11" x 14" prints from LIFE's photo labs, many of them unpublished in the magazine, are in the Ashram archives.

Henri Cartier-Bresson, certainly one of the greatest photographers of the twentieth century, visited Tiruvannamalai in 1948 and 1950. He had just founded Magnum, the elite and pioneering photographer's co-operative, and stayed for one and half years in India. Like a true master, he had the uncanny knack of being at the right place at the right time, capturing his decisive moment with astonishing artistry and professional regularity. Thus we see his classic coverage of Gandhiji's last days and funeral, Nehru sharing a laugh with the Mountbattens, as well as the people and landscapes of a timeless India awakening to a life of freedom.

A deceptively simply photograph of Ramanasramam, dated 1948, shows the white peacock in full display. Towering haystacks, exactly like the ones today, dwarf the few figures watching in the middle distance. Above it all, Arunachala looms, silent and magnificient. It could have been shot yesterday.

On April 4, 1950 (ten days before Bhagavan's *Mahasamadhi*), Cartier-Bresson photographed Bhagavan, by then ailing quite rapidly, in the small room which is now called the Nirvana Room. There are three pictures that we know of from this occasion, and it turned out that these were the last photographs of Bhagavan taken while he was still inhabiting the body. Exquisite, available- light pictures shot with great sensitivity and skill. Despite the physical agony (at least, in the eyes of the onlooker) Bhagavan is looking directly into the camera, still smiling faintly with indescribable sweetness. His head, as if it were a great weight, is tilted; his cancerous left arm swathed in cotton. The final *darshan*.



His Lotus Feet

"Ramana Maharshi", Cartier-Bresson said in an interview in 1990, "was a completely accomplished being. At Tiruvannamalai I saw a ball of fire moving slowly across the sky. As a practical Frenchman I timed it. Some kid came out and said that Bhagavan died 13 minutes to 9 in the evening. I think he was buried vertically. I took some pictures with a flash which is something I never do."

His pictures of Bhagavan's body, bedecked in flowers for the burial rites, are too strong for the sensibilities of some devotees. Others are reminded of Bhagavan's teaching - that we are not the body nor even the mind, but the Self. There are two other images of the press of grieving devotess. One depicts a scene of frenzied loss, hands reaching out for something which is forever gone. In the other, devotees simply stand, their attention intent on something off-camera, faces, the very picture of sadness and beautiful even in grief.

Bhagavan is reported to have remarked, near the end: "They say that I am going, but where can I go. I am here". The final assurance.

When Bhagavan walked and talked amongst us, and his disciples reported that his picture had appeared to them, transfigured in brilliant light, he counselled them to put aside all form and to remember that what was thus seen was perishable; what has an origin must have an end; it is the intuitive perception of the Self that must be seized.

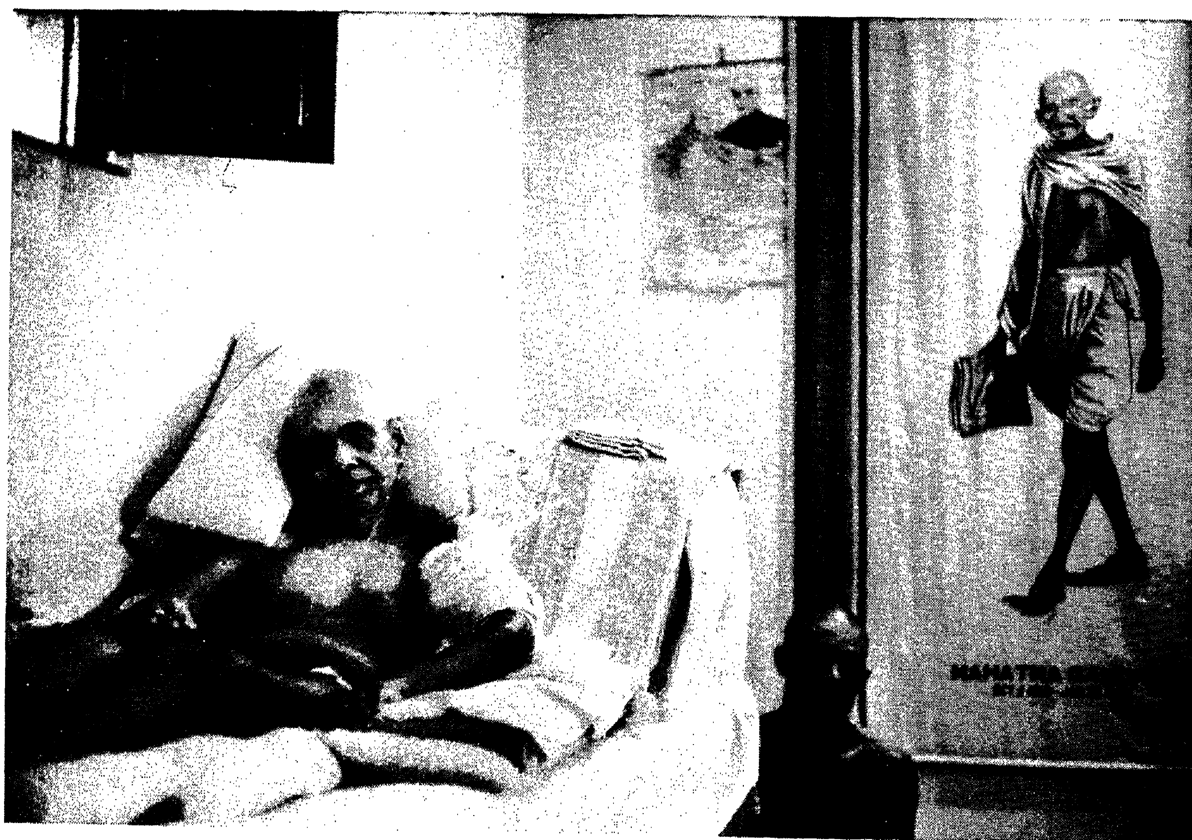
In quest of Self, many persons have incidentally also contributed to the care and dissemination of Bhagavan's photographs in the decades since his *mahasamadhi*. In the sixties, Sri Sai Das worked in the Ashram darkroom, meeting the needs of devotees as well as publications, making giant enlargements by methods ingenious in the absence of special equipment, recopying original prints found in the Ashram or requested from devotees, striving always for fidelity to the original. Krishnan of Ramana Studio in Tiruvannamalai has performed similar service for some twenty five years and his son Mugilan continues in his father's footsteps.

In the late 1970s, Matthew and Joan Greenblatt performed a great labour of love, the fruit of which is there for all to see in *Bhagavan Sri Ramana: A Pictorial Biography*. In 1985, they made large format copy negatives of nearly fifty rare Ramana prints with the help of the chief archivist of the International

Museum of Photography at George Eastman House in Rochester, NY, the foremost photographic institution in the world. A set of these is in the Ashram archives.

More recently, the concept of a photographic archive was planted at the Ashram by Jim Lemkin, a multi-talented being who, among other accomplishments, has been a professional photographer for more than 25 years. Consequently, the work of creating archival standard copy negatives and fine prints, a mammoth task, has been devotedly taken up by V. Karthik of Ramana Professional Photographic Laboratory. Despite an extremely busy professional life, he has generated a substantial body of material, apart from completing various other special photographic projects relating to Bhagavan's images.

"Ramana Maharshi was a completely accomplished being", said Henri Cartier-Bresson, who photographed Bhagavan on April 4, 1950.



At the same time, Graham Boyd has been working with single-minded dedication, making high-resolution scans from the original negatives, spending hundreds of hours in painstaking computer restoration. The first results are already available on CD. This is in addition to having keyed all the books published by the Ashram into computer, as well as creating Bhagavan's home pages on the Internet.

There is so much more to the photographic aspect of Bhagavan's presence amongst us. We may never get to know all of it. Luckily, we have Bhagavan's oft repeated pointer that we need know only one thing, knowing which all else is known. Know thyself. And it is in this boundless space that we meet the many fellow-travellers who gave themselves to Bhagavan in this field, most of them unmentioned in this cursory essay. There is a lot to admire, both technically and aesthetically. For instance: all those chiaroscuro photographs of Bhagavan on his couch in the old hall are bravura performances of the art, as any photographer attempting today to shoot the same subject in ambient light with a slow or medium-speed film will appreciate. In addition, Bhagavan's head used to constantly shake–he once likened Self-realisation to the entry of an elephant into a thatched hut–making high shutter speeds a necessity.

On another front, fresh images turn up every now and then; a print here, a negative there, like hidden *termas* coming to light at the right time, which is always a joyful occasion. This year, Ella Maillart, the Swiss travel-writer and photographer who was with Bhagavan in the 1940s, gifted four of her photographs of Bhagavan to the Ashram. "I understand you wish to gather the rare documents on the Sage and I want to help you", she wrote, and despite her advanced years, she instructed the museum to which she had given all her original negatives to make the prints for Ramanasramam at her own expense.

Is all this taking us somewhere? Yes. A respected western Vipassana teacher pointed out that it was three centuries after the Buddha's *mahanirvana* before any images in his likeness were made. Two and a half millennia after his passing, this need to represent his human form has spawned a vast and expressive iconography. As befitting the twentieth century, Bhagavan has left us with authentic templates; photons bouncing off his perished form, focussed through glass, etching patterns of light and shadow on equally frag-

ile silver salts embedded in translucent gelatin. What then is imperishable, permanent, real? There comes a time–outside of time itself– when one shuts the eyes to both word and picture, to enter the bliss of simply being. *Iru. Summa iru.*

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

He who is forgetful of the Self, mistaking the physical body for it, and goes through innumerable births, is like one who wanders all over the world in a dream. Thus realizing the Self would only be like waking up from the dream wanderings.

One who asks himself 'Who am I?' and 'Where am I?', though existing all the while as the Self, is like a drunken man who enquires about his own identity and whereabouts.

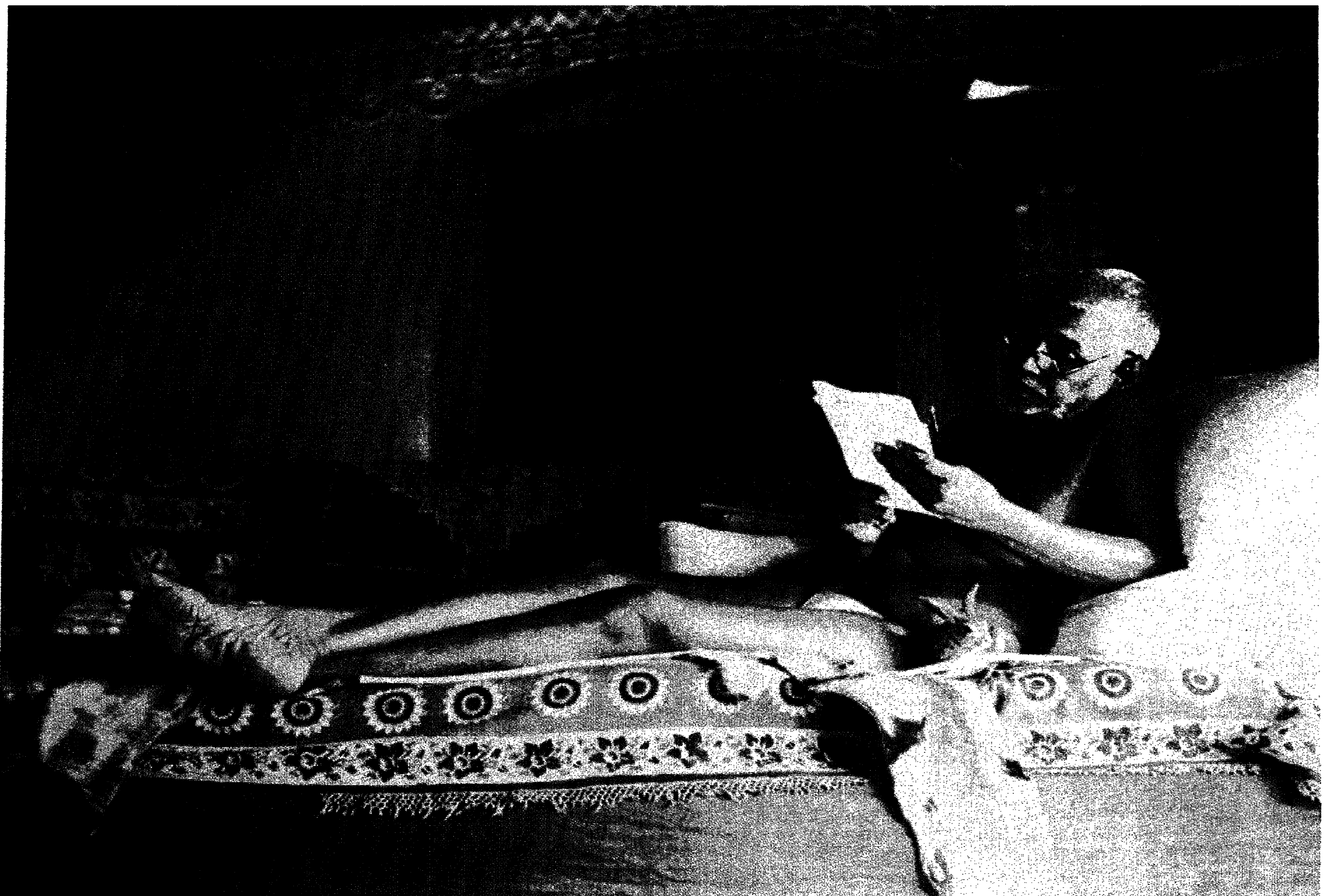
While in fact the body is in the Self, he who thinks that the Self is within the insentient body is like one who considers the cloth of the screen which supports a cinema picture to be contained within the picture.

Does an ornament exist apart from the gold of which it is made? Where is the body apart from the Self? He who considers the body to be himself is an ignorant man. He who regards himself as the Self is the Enlightened One who has realized the Self.

The One Self, the Sole Reality, alone exists eternally. When even the Ancient Teacher, Dakshinamurti, revealed It through speechless eloquence, who else could convey it by speech?

Bhagavan Sri Ramana's Ekatma Panchakam





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IMAGE RESTORATION AND SADHANA

Graham Boyd

I have been graciously requested to write a little something about my experience in the image restoration work for inclusion in the centenary publication and I offer this to my fellow devotees in the hope that it may add a little light to the inestimable value of service.

First and foremost I do not know what I have done to deserve the privilege granted to me by Bhagavan Ramana, but can only be eternally grateful for this unique and beneficial sadhana.

When I first started this work it was undoubtedly with ego uppermost. I had no idea of how to go about the work and no experience at all with the software, but the idea that I was serving my Guru and fellow devotees brought me comfort and resolve in an otherwise profligate life.

To say that this has not been an easy path is an understatement and its progress has been likened to that of Milarepa. Each time I thought I had accomplished some progress, something would come along to destroy the work or make me start it again. At first this caused me some serious concern and much frustration, but with each repeat I saw that the previous work was flawed, not only in the result but more importantly in my attitude towards my part in it.

In the early years I began to entertain the idea that I had acquired skill in the art of image restoration and that I could consequently earn a livelihood from it (in addition to carrying out this sadhana); little did I comprehend that there is no room in sadhana for worldly ambition and that any such idea destroys in an instant the merit of service to the Guru. This is a hard lesson to put into practice,because even the slightest satisfaction with results arouses pride and all the worthless ideas that follow it. Bhagavan always insisted on perfection of effort which leads to perfection in results, and this can only be achieved when the mind does not interfere with the work.

People have commented that "Bhagavan's Grace must be with you" as if such an idea is out of the ordinary but the truth of the matter is that

Bhagavan's Grace is always with me and with everyone else and when I am with His Grace the work goes well but when I think that I have some part to play in it then all I can add to the work is interference and error. This is the first lesson of service.

The second lesson is patience - unlimited patience. When the work started I was already noted for the patience I displayed with most things, yet within I would often seethe with impatience and become angry, but suppress it; this habit would create some rather destructive time - bombs and poor quality workmanship. Bhagavan always stressed "Endurance and yet more endurance" and through the repeated work I am learning the *real* meaning of patience - endurance without anticipation is real patience and everything prior to this was a fake.

The third lesson is dispassion. Dispassion in the specific work followed by passion in the remaining time of each day is passion in everything. Dispassion means not seeking reward for the work itself, nor for the service nor expecting worldly fame or betterment through it. It means always standing at the back of the queue and never seeking to reach the front. The work must therefore be done because it is there to do and not for any overt or covert motive, not even the idea of service to the Guru, for this also entails ego.

The final lesson is surrender. Surrender is either total or not at all and this is the hardest of all the lessons to put into practice. Surrender means accepting everything with equanimity and relinquishing even the idea of decision-making; but this is not always possible in everyday worldly life; so for the sake of practicality surrender has to be restricted to that which is dedicated to Bhagavan.

I pray that through the Grace of Bhagavan I might one day learn and be capable of perfectly executing all of the above qualities necessary for genuine sadhana.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–o0o–

Of thoughts, the 'I' is first,
'T is only after that,
'You,' 'he,' 'she,' 'it,' 'they,' 'these'
And other thoughts appear.
But if these thoughts arise,
One should not yield to them.
"To whom do these arise?"
Must be his only thought.
The answer comes out clear, -
"These thoughts arise to me."
His question next must be,
"Who is this 'I' and whence?"
Thus let him seek the source
From which the 'I' thought springs -
The source that's nam'd the Heart.
And when the Heart is reach'd,
Swarajya sure is gain'd,
Where difference is gone
Of virtue and of vice,
Of self and not-self,
Of sorrow and of joy.
No death is there, nor birth,
No darkness, nor seen light.
All these illusions fly,
Before Thy glorious blaze.

Arunachala Ashtakam Ver. 7



The waters of the ocean
By sun and wind upraised
As cloud and rain descend
Down hill and slope as streams
To reach again their source,
The Ocean, and there rest.
The feather'd tribe that leads
Its leafy home on earth
And restless, on the wing
E'er wanders far and wide
At last to find its rest,
Its starting place regains.
Oh Arunachala great!
'Tis from Thy wisdom's ocean,
The Jivas flow'd of yore.
'Tis from thy tree of life,
These birds took flight in air.
Now that they long for rest.
Inquiring what's their source,
They flow or fly to Thee
Their ocean or their tree.

Arunachala Ashtakam Ver. 8

GRACEFUL BHAGAVAN

Saroja Krishnan

When I was young, may be in my teens I used to sit in the hall, watching with interest the happenings around me. Who comes into the hall, who goes out, what they say, what Bhagavan does and at whom He directs His gaze were all matters of interest to me. I would feel elated and proud whenever His gaze rested on me. One day I was seated near the second door under the windows idly watching, as usual, when Bhagavan's eyes turned to me and rested there. The usual first feeling of pride and elation fell away and my eyes were locked in His, unable to turn away. How does one describe the indescribable? Dark and wide, cool and bright, melting with mercy and kindness, those heavenly orbs seemed to expand and fill the room and all space, engulfing me and everything else. Time stood still. I can't say how long I gazed like this. May be a minute, may be an hour. Looking back, I understand that this was His *Nayana Diksha* (Initiation by Look). This has the power to scorch all our vasanas and lead to liberty. I did not know anything of this, then, but merely felt happy. Surely Bhagavan's Look of Grace never goes waste. The seed that was planted then is sure to bear fruit sometime; but when, is the burning question. I wait.

I was about fifteen or sixteen. I was undergoing mental suffering. People around were avoiding me. My husband was not in town. In despair I tried to put an end to my life by fasting continuously for four or five days but did not succeed. It was at that time that uncle Rajagopala Iyer engaged a taxi to take aunt Thangammal, my mother Gowri and others to Tiruvannamalai. With my mother-in-law's permission, he took me along. Even here, my mental agony continued. The time came for us to return home. In the hall Bhagavan was seated on the sofa, leaning against the cushions. One by one, they prostrated and took leave. I was the last. With a heavy heart , I prostrated to Him. When I raised my head, my eyes fell on Bhagavan's Feet, planted firmly together on a low stool placed in front of the sofa. My hands shot forward of their own volition, as if propelled by some powerful force, and grasped those feet! It was only for an instant. I rose and almost ran out of the hall in trepidation, startled at my own temerity. Even though I had a feeling that Bhagavan was looking at me I could not summon the courage to look up at Him. A font of happiness seemed to burst forth from somewhere

deep within me. Wave after wave of Bliss washed over me and I seemed to be floating in it. I was oblivious of everything else. On the journey back, others were singing songs on Bhagavan and talking. But nothing seemed to register in my mind. Thoughts of Bhagavan and the surging happiness absorbed every nook and corner of my being. Pain had disappeared without a trace. At home, even though the old situation continued, nothing touched me. This song in my heart stayed with me for quite some time, but gradually started waning. External circumstances also changed. Thinking back now at this point of time, I feel that Bhagavan had granted me His *Sparsa Diksha* (initiation by touch). I had never seen Bhagavan place His feet like that on the stool. But for Bhagavan's will, I would not have dared to place my hands on His feet. Bhagavan gave me the courage to hold them. Above all, whence came that overwhelming happiness, how and why? What was it? In my lifetime I have never experienced anything remotely resembling it. Were this a common occurrence, all His attendants would have experienced it. That was not the case. The fruit of Bhagavan's Grace is deliverance and is sure to be mine some day. I am sure that it was only with the purpose of mitigating the suffering of this helpless girl, that my Bhagavan, in His infinite mercy, lent me those sacred feet to hold and the courage to hold them.

On a hot summer day Bhagavan was sitting in the pandal. In those days a summer shelter for the sake of coolness, used to be erected between the Eastern side window of Bhagavan's hall and the well. Only a few persons were there. I took this opportunity to ask Bhagavan something that I had wanted to, for a long time. I went and stood near Him and said in a low voice "is it true that women should not practice meditation"? Bhagavan, who was sitting calmly leaning on the cushions, sat up bolt upright and said in a loud voice, "who said so"? It sounded like a roar. Startled and trembling, I murmured something and returned to my place. It is well known that Bhagavan has always asserted that there is no difference between a man and woman in matters such as meditation, samadhi and liberation. When Bhagavan said,"who said so", firmly, it was as if He had set His seal of approval on the charter of women's spiritual liberation.

In my young days I used to ask Bhagavan to grant me all kinds of paltry things that I deemed important at that time. It was like begging a paise from a billionaire and everytime the desired boon was granted, perhaps out of pity for my utter stupidity. I don't remember not getting the thing I wished for.

Uptill now my firm belief that I had only to petition him and it would be granted, had never been belied. Bhagavan would listen and would either nod or say "hm". Rarely would he ask for some clarification. But seemingly impossible things, just took place. When the second world war was raging, all of us returned to Salem from Ceylon (Sri Lanka of to-day). My husband alone stayed back. He was firmly determined to return only after selling our coconut estate there. When we in Salem heard that Ceylon had been bombed , we became very anxious. Who would buy an estate in Batticalao that was being bombed? That too it was the biggest estate in Ceylon; the sale seemed impossible and my husband would not return without selling it. The only way out that I knew, was to take refuge in Bhagavan Ramana . The impossible became possible, at the last minute. Some Chettiar purchased the estate at a price that was also advantageous to us. My husband came home, safe and sound. Bhagavan's grace also procured him a job in the central government service although he had crossed the age limit for selection.

I had passed the teens and had been married for six years. People started advising me to visit this or that temple, go on pilgrimage or take up some vow for the gift of a baby. Even from my childhood I had been inordinately fond of babies. Even my mother had petitioned Bhagavan on my behalf. Bhagavan said it seems, "there is a song in *Tiruppugazh - Thandayani Vendayam....*" - which is said to confer the boon of a baby on the singer. I learnt this song and on three occasions sang it in Bhagavan's presence, accompanying myself on the veena. It was only after this that my son Ramana Kumar was born. Similarly another song in *Tiruppugazh - Neelangol Maegathin....* was pointed out by Bhagavan as meant for nubile girls praying for good husbands. My sister-in-law Hamsa and cousin Sarada were among the girls who sang the song and were happily married.

There was a celebration in the Ashram, a few days after I sang the "baby song", in the hall; might have been Bhagavan's Jayanti, I cannot recall exactly. The big pandal put up for the occasion was full. People mostly with eyes closed in meditation, were sitting in silent rows. There was a low bamboo fence around Bhagavan. Mr. Osborne's two year old baby son Adam somehow crept into the enclosure and toddled towards Bhagavan who gave him His usual smile of welcome. After a while, the child returned to the fence, and not knowing how to cross it, stood in bewilderment. Uncle Rajagopal had a vivid thought - as he told us later - "Saroja has sung the

Thiruppugazh in Bhagavan's presence. If she comes and picks up Adam, a son would be born to her within a year." I was sitting at the farthest end of the long hall. Seeing the child struggling to come out, I rose automatically; and crossing the length of the hall, reached the fence. Bending over, I picked up Adam and put him down near his mummy, of course after a cuddle kiss to the chubby little one. On reaching home, chittappa (uncle) told us about his thought in Bhagavan's presence and declared like an oracle, "I bet a son will be born to her within a year," and so it transpired.

I did not stop my daily practice of going round Bhagavan's hall 108 times, carrying the heavy load of advanced pregnancy and brought on myself the severe censure from the ladies of the kitchen. Medical facility in Tiruvannamalai was rather inadequate. So, my mother was anxious and decided to take Bhagavan's advise. With this in mind she was entering the hall, when she heard Bhagavan telling someone firmly and loudly, "no, no, not here". On hearing this,my mother immediately decided to take me to Vellore. Bhagavan's reply had been received, even though nothing was specifically asked!

With Bhagavan's guidance, uncle Rajagopala Iyer took me and mother to Vellore. Initially we stayed at a place which was far from the town and inconvenient to us. Uncle Rajagopala Iyer went hunting for a place near the hospital. While he was walking along, he saw a cart being loaded with household articles, in front of a house. Straightaway he entered the house and made enquiries. A portion of the house had just been vacated and the house-holder agreed to rent it to us. Uncle settled us there the same day and returned to Tiruvannamalai and narrated to Bhagavan the details. Bhagavan listened to everything that happened at Vellore and said with an innocent air "No.1 in Kasi Viswanathar Koil street? Looking through the window of the front room, you can see straight ahead upto *garbagriha* of the Viswanathar Temple across the road. The verandah is rather high. But there would be a bad stink from the gutter nearby". The people in the hall looked at each other with a wild surprise! Bhagavan has never been to Vellore. But He is describing the place. They were excited thinking that Bhagavan had inadvertently admitted His clairvoyance. After a pause, Bhagavan said with a smile, "Nayana stayed in that house for quite some time. Mahadevan was born there. In his letters to me he would always describe everything in detail". Everybody laughed. Would Bhagavan, who had always been strictly against any display of siddhis, ever admit to having performed them? He

would always point out a rationale behind every miracle that took place in His presence and make it seem an ordinary occurrence.

I was well into the third day of dry labour, without making much progress, despite repeated alternate administrations of pituterin and morphia which left me in a comatose condition. The third night the doctors decided to do a Caesarean section - often fatal in the pre-penicillin days. They feared that the baby could not be taken out in one piece, and any further delay would endanger the mother's life also. My mother and others were in great distress on hearing this and sent off a telegram of appeal to Bhagavan, our sole refuge. Bhagavan saw the telegram at one thirty past midnight and exclaimed, "is it our Saroja,". When I heard this later, I could hardly believe that Bhagavan had said so, though I felt very happy and proud. Bhagavan had referred to me as, "our Saroja"! He has accepted me! What tapas have I ever done, to merit this? What sacrifice have I ever made or meritorious deed performed, to earn this supreme accolade?

Bhagavan read the telegram in Tiruvannamalai and instantly in Vellore my baby son Ramana Kumar was born, by a normal easy delivery. The doctors were confounded (naturally!) that after three whole days of dry labour, after the instruments had been sterilized and the surgeon donned the gloves preparatory to doing a Caesarean, a normal delivery should occur without recourse to even the forceps! Could there be the least doubt as to who is behind the whole happening? First the mention of the song and its performance, the Adam episode, the firm "No" at the opportune moment necessitating the move to Vellore for delivery,the lucky chance of finding the house which turned out to be the former residence of Nayana and where his son was born - hence known to Bhagavan - the wasted labour resulting in the necessity of a Caesarean and finally the telegram culminating with 'impossible' normal delivery. It is transparent who master minded, or should I say non-minded - the whole chain of events. But could it be pinned on Him? No way. Solid reasons had been provided for the rationalist - and for us to remember not to get carried away by miraculous happenings.

I was staying with my brother Ramiah who was stationed as Sub-Inspector in Annur, when my baby was six months old. There were a few cases of small-pox in town. Suddenly Ramana developed a high temperature. The doctor suspected small-pox. Frightened, I despatched a telegram

to Bhagavan immediately. Within minutes Bhagavan's 'prasad' arrived from the Ashram. It had been despatched a few days earlier by the Ashram after some puja or other and had arrived at an opportune moment when it was desperately needed, as if in answer to my fervent prayers. At sight of my Bhagavan's prasad, all fears fled and peace flooded my heart and I began calmly applying the vibhuti to the swelling on baby's leg.

The next day the doctor declared that it was not small- pox to my great relief. But the high temperature persisted and the red swelling in the foot was spreading upwards. Though the doctor did not tell me at the time, what Ramana had was a dread childhood disease known in Tamil as *" Odu Karappan"* (a fast-spreading eczema) for which there was no known remedy then. It was characterised by high temperature accompanied by a red swelling in the foot which would creep up the leg until it reaches the chest, when the patient would collapse. Blissfully ignorant of all this, I went on calmly applying the vibhuti to baby's swollen leg, praying the while. The child lay moaning in my lap ravaged by the disease; the rapidly-rising angry red swelling reached the thigh. It stopped there and started to recede and the fever came down. Next morning when the doctor saw the now peacefully sleeping baby, he was happily surprised. He had only been administering placebos to reassure me, as there was no known remedy. He said he had felt great pity on seeing my glad relief when he said it was not the pox, because pox was curable; this one was not. I am sure when Bhagavan saw the telegram in Tiruvannamalai, in Annur the rising swelling in baby's leg had stopped and receded, and the disease had retreated, defeated.

The attention paid by Bhagavan to the artless talk of little children was no way less than that paid to the great wise scholars. Six year old Ramana had come down from Delhi on his summer vacation. He sat down in front of Bhagavan crossed his legs in imitation and said proudly "Bhagavan I too did tapas this morning on the mountain" (he had climbed up a little way and had sat there for a while). Bhagavan placed his forefinger on his nose in surprise and exclaimed with a smile "he did tapas, it seems!". Feeling proud and encouraged, Ramana stood up recited some poem or essay learnt at school, with proper gestures. Bhagavan listened with rapt attention and obvious enjoyment. He was not pally acting to please a child - any more than when listening to the learned ones. Weren't all us children, treated with equal scrupulous courtesy and kindness? He was a child at the time, listening

in empathy.

One morning my uncle Rajagopala Iyer came home in great haste, hurriedly took a two anna piece (about thirteen paise in modern coin) and ran back without saying anything. We were all much intrigued by this behaviour until he came home in the evening and explained the matter. It was an illuminating event.

Bhagavan was coming down the hill after His morning stroll, as usual. Suddenly a dove fell down at His feet. Bhagavan bent down and picking it up, cradled it in His arms and gently soothed it by passing his arms lightly over its back. Then He turned round to see how the bird happened to fall down. A young hunter was hesitantly standing a little distance away with a catapult in hand. Bhagavan remarked sotto voce, "this is the poor boy's food, but two annas would do to buy something to satisfy his hunger." Uncle Rajagopala Iyer and an attendant had accompanied Bhagavan and were standing by His side. One word from Bhagavan, one of them would have run down and brought the money in a minute from the office. Did He ever consider the Ashram as His? In his eagerness to carry out Bhagavan's remark and desire to pay it from his own pocket, uncle ran down to the office and without mentioning anything, borrowed the two annas for himself, went up and paid-off the hunter-boy. He immediately returned the money to the office, having run home to fetch it. To be the one to carry out the words of Bhagavan was his deepest desire.

Bhagavan did not send word to the office even for this paltry sum. Perhaps, He to whom belonged all creation wanted to show us that He considered nothing as belonging to Him; that He owned nothing.

The dove lay still and dazed in Bhagavan's arms. It must have been seriously injured. It did not move even after Bhagavan came back to the hall. "A few drops of green grapes, squeezed on its head, would cure him," Bhagavan was saying, when an out-station devotee entered the hall with a few bunches of green-grapes, as an offering to Bhagavan. "Hey look, we are just talking about green grapes and here they are," exclaimed Bhagavan. A few drops of grape juice were applied to the dove's head. In a short while the bird stirred, raised its head and looked around. After a few tentative steps, it fluttered its wings as if to show Bhagavan that it had recovered and took

to its wings. Where, when and how did Bhagavan learn this treatment for birds and who is the vet who taught Him?

My uncle Rajagopal Iyer is an outstanding example of how Bhagavan's grace continues to guide his devotees after He had shed his body. He was a very persuasive talker. He could talk you into doing things even against your will, such was the power of his words. He played a significant role in the shaping and writing of Bhagavan's "will". His is one of the witnessing signatures. His surrender to Bhagavan was total. Vexed at his incessant talking and its effects (sometimes deleterious) his wife Thangammal and others would remonstrate. But he would declare " I fear no one. I shall stop talking only when my Bhagavan bids me". At the fag end of his life Chittappa (uncle) had a vivid dream one night, in which Bhagavan struck him with his stick saying "shut up". From then onwards, until death, he preserved silence, showing no interest in anything - completely detached. I did not meet him, but heard the momentous news from devotees coming from Bangalore, where Rajagopal Iyer was living with his youngest son Ramanan. Mahalakshmamma of Bangalore referred to it as a miracle, which indeed it was, and his grand daughter Ramani confirmed the news. In order to redeem his ardent devotee - Bhagavan had bound his incessantly wagging tongue and stilled the ever roaming mind.

Many incidents in my life can simply be called coincidences. But I consider all of them as Bhagavan's 'Leela' and Grace. Bhagavan returned me to the shelter of those beloved feet that He bade me clasp so long ago.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

If a seeker after moksha sets
His mind on miscellaneous *siddhis*,
Bondage tightens, as the roots
Of ego swell in size and strength.

Garland of Guru's Sayings Ver. 222

REMINISCENCES

A European Sadhak

Sri Bhagavan was unique, peerless. Why should I say was? He is unique and He is peerless.

One gracious look, one understanding nod and one sympathetic word had always meant oceans to the earnest seeker, to the aspiring pilgrim. And which sincere voyager has gone to Him and returned empty? And which devout sadhaka has sought His guidance and has not got it?

The intellectual quibbler might have been given the short shrift by Him. The dry philosopher might have found in Him a steel wall. The eternal doubter would have returned from Him not any the better.

But those who have unreservedly surrendered themselves to a pursuit of Truth have never failed to find in Him a great guide. And in what infinite ways has He helped the true sadhaks?

Sometimes the sought for guidance would come through an answer given to somebody's question. Sometimes it would be provided through a direct monosyllabic answer. And sometimes it would come through a subjective experience.

And if the hundreds of pilgrims on the path of spirituality and guidance from Sri Bhagavan were to unfold their subjective experiences, the world will know how gracious, compassionate, benevolent and all-pervasive Sri Bhagavan has been and is.

But subjective experiences are intimate and they are provided only for the personal spiritual advancement of the particular aspirant. It is , therefore, not usually considered necessary to take the world into confidence regarding the subjective experiences of sadhaks.

But since I have been invited by the editor to write on how Sri Maharshi has been helping the aspirants, I venture to refer to just one experience of mine.

Once I was going on the eastern side of Arunachala hill in full belief

and confidence that I had unreservedly surrendered myself to Sri Bhagavan. Suddenly I saw a leper woman walking towards me. Her face was terribly disfigured by the disease. Her nose had been completely eaten away and in its place were found two holes. The fingers on her hands had all gone. She advanced towards me and extending the stumps of her hands asked me to give her something to eat.

The sight of her disgusted me, frightened me. My whole frame shuddered with terror that she might touch me. Overcome by repulsion, I hastened to move away from her.

Suddenly, I heard the voice of Sri Bhagavan coming clear and ringing from across the mountains. It said: "To surrender to me is to surrender to every one, for the Self is in every one." Hearing this I regained my poise and offered the leper woman the plantains that I had in my bag.

In a few minutes, I saw myself standing before not the disfigured leper woman but a tall old man with white long hair and beard. The man looked like a Rishi and was smiling. When the thought of prostrating before the Rishi entered my mind, I saw before me the old leper woman again. I bowed happy at heart though somewhat confused in mind and then resumed my walk up the hill.

This experience taught me a new lesson and made me tread a new path. I have cited this as just one of the ways through which Sri Bhagavan teaches, guides and helps.

(Call Divine Jan. 1, 1959)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

Salutations to Sri Ramana, the universal Master, the dispeller of misery from the world, the One who chases away the darkness of his devotees and diplays himself as the Eternal Consciousness inhering in the heart, blazing both within and without, bereft of the least trace of ignorance - the One who shines as the Transcendental Truth underlying the world and beyond!

Chatvarimsat Ver. 22

NAMO RAMANA

A. S. Venugopala Rao

I was steeped in horrible ignorance about Bhagavan and His unique Grace and Greatness. It was His unbounded compassion that caught this poor soul in one grip as it were and sowed the seed of a total transformation in my outlook, in my way of life. And what a wonder! I was not even aware of his *Mercy* for quite a long time. My *Avidya* was so deep rooted and strong.

One pleasant morning there was a knock at my door. A local gentleman, who was not very familiar to me, was standing outside. I called him in and after the formal introduction he astonished me with his request that I may kindly accept the invitation of the president, Ramana·Maharshi Center for Learning, Bangalore and give a talk on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the Maharshi. I pleaded my ignorance . He insisted that I should not miss this rare occasion. Well, talking on subjects known and also totally unknown is not new to a professor in a college. Particularly to one who teaches language and literature ! As a friendly gesture I yielded to my new friend though some what reluctantly. I began to study the books like a student, prepared profuse notes and was ready for the occasion. The formal invitation came and surely it was a nice gathering of scholars and elite audience at Bangalore. My talk was well received by the kind audience. I did not know then, that it was just the beginning and surely not an end. Sri Bhagavan had by His unique way caught me already in his magic grip. It took me quite some time to understand and realise MAHARSHI'S master grip. The Tiger's Jaw was only to kill my ego and raise me up towards His lotus feet of love and compassion. Literally, it was Bhagavan Ramana who knocked at my door and stood before me and beckoned me towards Him and embraced me in His compassionate hug. After many years I sang of Him " Yava Modia Ramana Matagrano Ivanu Maneya Kada Tatti Manava Kandavanu" (who is this magician who knocked at my door and bought my Mind?).

Well, that was only the beginning. A few months later I got a copy of the noted little book of Paul Brunton "MAHARSHI AND HIS MESSAGE", for translation in to my mother tongue - Kannada, one of the five main languages of South India. I was fascinated and felt elevated. For, P.B. to me is not only

a mystic but a mystic poet. Yes, his prose is really poetic in its charm and mysticism. As a humble student of literature, I liked this nice book and my translation was really a love of labour. It was published soon by RMCL, Bangalore and was well received. My ego chuckled without knowing that Bhagavan was tightening his grip to literally drag me towards him.

Translation of "TALKS" into Kannada and its publication is a story by itself signifying Bhagavan's silent grace. As the devotees of Bhagavan very well know, this text is the Bible of Ramana Vedanta and an authentic record of His teaching. It runs into 800 pages in print. The work had to be taken up mostly during late night hours as I was busy with classroom teaching throughout the day. It took almost one and a half year for completion of the translation. But what was strange was that never once was the dictionary used, suitable words simply flashed as it were. What more, when a particular question was haunting me - whether spiritual or even worldly - during the day, the most appropriate answer would be found during the translation of a particular passage, in reply to a similar question by some devotee! Such experience literally thrilled me and I felt a deep rapport was established between me and the *"Sadguru"*. The president of RMCL, Bangalore, met the publisher along with me with a request to take up the work for printing. The noted publisher at first put a note of apology stating that he had practically stopped all Kannada publications. But wonder of wonders is that within a few minutes he changed his mind and took up the manuscript for printing and in fact later became one of the devotees of Bhagavan. The beautifully got up publication came within a short period and registered a fast sale. When I made over the royalty amount to the Ramanasramam as my humble contribution, perhaps, a tinge of ego was still left in me. But at the end of the year Bhagavan granted his boon in the form of an award for best translation work for the year by the "Karnataka Rajya Sahitya Academy". When I found the Prize amount being almost the double of what I had contributed to the Ashramam, I felt ashamed at my ego. There was nothing I could offer to Bhagavan! His bountiful mercy knew no bounds.

My first visit to Ramanasramam was with my younger son in January 1982. It happened to be my son's birthday. At my request the authorities permitted me to stay in the Ashram campus for the night. We were soaked in kindness and hospitality of the Ashram people and felt the strong and visible presence of the Maharshi everywhere. We spent a blissful night and in the

morning I mentioned to my good friend Sri.Ganesan, who was then in charge of the office, "what a strange coincidence sir! I am here at my son's birthday, without any pre plan." Pat came his reply with deep conviction: no friend. There is no word as "coincidence" in Bhagavan's dictionary. Everything is pre determined. It is for a purpose you and your son are here. Bhagavan knows what it is all about." What purpose could it be! I chuckled. But when I found in later years how I was drawn towards Arunachala, year by year and finally made it my home and how my younger son also could stay in the Ashram for almost six blissful months, I understood the import of Sri.Ganesan's words of wisdom. My visits to Ashram continued year by year and the duration of my stay each time increased. I had the good fortune of meeting elder devotees who were so close to Bhagavan and were the eye witness of his graceful presence. These blessed souls included Sriyuts Balarama Reddy, Prof.Ramachandraiah, Kunjuswamiji, Annamalai Swamiji, Kittumama and others who were so kind and compassionate towards me and my wife. They were never hesitant to share their intimate experiences with a stranger like me. Bhagavan stood deep rooted in my heart and began to guide me day in and day out. Once I sang of Him:

Thou lighted my streets
in the day
Thou came as a pleasant
moonlight in my dreams
And Oh Ramana ! you fed
me with milk of compassion
in my deep sleep without
my even knowing it!
Only you who are beyond
awakening, dream, and deep sleep
Only you who are only a witness!

It was during my stay in the Ashram that songs in Kannada and Sanskrit flowed from my heart unceasingly and effortlessly. They were done thus at Skandasram, Virupaksha cave, while doing Giripradakshina, while sitting silently in the old Hall; by Bhagavan's Grace, my wife almost immediately set them to proper tunes and would sing them before Bhagavan. She is thrilled even to recollect how the most meaningful and melodious tunes would flash in her without any effort. My heart melts at Bhagavan's grace on both of us.

Once I was working as the presiding officer in a village in Karnataka very near Kollur the noted pilgrimage centre in Karnataka. Completing my work, I stayed in a lodge for the night with a programme to visit this place the next morning with a friend of mine. It rained cats and dogs as it were till 2 A.M. Electric lights went off and I did not have a torch even. I had to answer nature's call and came out of my room. To my left a few yards away, there was the backyard and I walked with faltering steps in the damp and mud way. After going some distance, for no logical reason I stopped and decided not to move further and came back. Again for no particular reason took the way to the right, answered nature's call in some corner and came back. Suddenly lights were on. My eyes caught the shining, piercing, compassionate eyes of Bhagavan in the beautiful photo I had kept on the table in my room. I did my prostrations and had a sound sleep till 6 A.M. the next morning. I got up and followed my own footsteps to the left towards backyard and in the damp mud could see a deep impression of my feet where from I had returned the previous night. To my horror I found just an inch before me an eight feet deep ditch (filled up with filthy water etc.,) dug for Gobargas plant. Just one step more, I would have fallen in to the ditch and perhaps would have breathed my last. It must be, and it is Bhagavan's Grace that inspired my intuition to retrace my steps exactly at this point.

Thus Bhagavan is showering his *"Karunya"* on me and my family, by choosing me as His instrument to sing his own song. He in his boundless mercy has given me and my wife and to my dear daughter, shelter and protection at his lotus feet. What is best for us , what we have to do and endure for the upliftment of our soul, surely Bhagavan knows. To Him we have surrendered completely.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

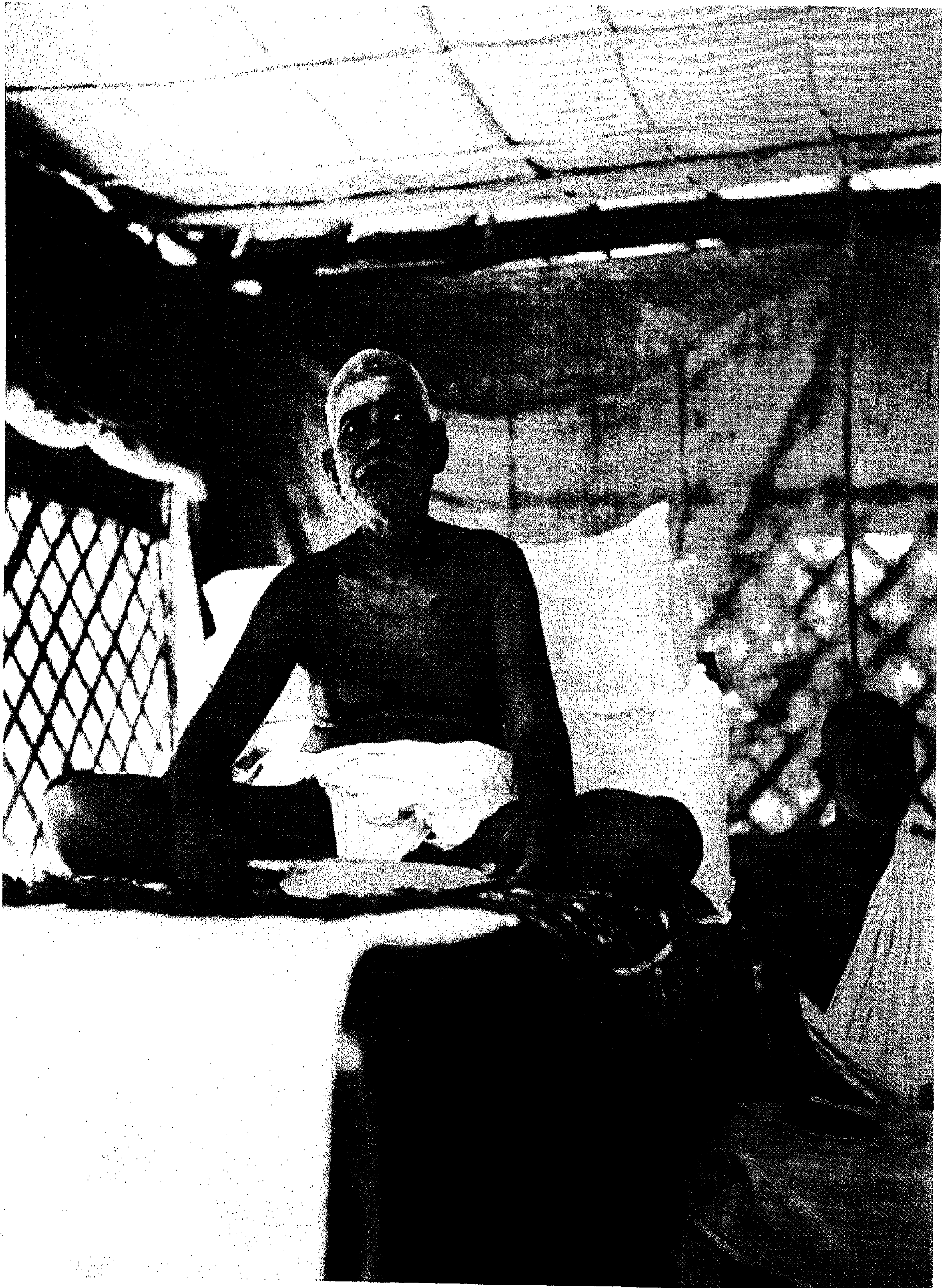
–oOo–

Even so since the Power supreme
Does, as it must, sustain all things,
Men should leave their burdens of care
On that Awareness and feel free.

Garland of Guru's Sayings Ver. 173



With Pranams from: V. D. Swami and Company Ltd., Madras



With Pranams from: Ranvir Khanna, Uma Khanna

HOW I CAME TO MY MASTER

Alan Jacobs

"For when the Gods have a good fire, they bring us what we wish for. Let us pray with a good fire."

Rig.Veda 1.26.9

The year was 1953, and aged 23 I married my teenage sweetheart. I was rapturously happy, having a good job, and now setting up a simple home. I wished to thank God for my happiness, and prayed earnestly, devotedly, to be able to live a truly religious life, even in the grossly materialistic twentieth century.

My good father had a strong religious faith. We were neo-orthodox Jews, and I took my Judaism very seriously. I had also received strong Christian influences in my education. I had come to the conclusion that there must be something more to conventional religion than Anglo-Judaism in the 1950's. I started to search comparative religions, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. I felt strongly drawn to the *Sanatana Dharma,* and read avidly the background to this great religion. I found myself for some reason on my own starting hatha yoga practice, meditation and colouring a Sri Chakra Yantra, which attracted me enormously. I was very much intellectually impressed by Aldous Huxley's conversion to Hinduism through the Ramakrishna Vedanta movement. Aldous was a boyhood hero of mine.

Then one morning, after finishing a yoga practice and shoulder stand, I suddenly experienced a transcendental feeling of great strength. The silent sound, almost barely vocalised, of "Who Am I?" enveloped me inwardly and outwardly for several minutes. It was tremendous and awe-inspiring.

I was transfixed, almost bowled over. I wondered what had happened. I knew beyond doubt that this was a major religious experience. It seemed the answer to my prayer "to lead a truly religious life"- the search for Who Am I. I had never heard of Ramana at this time, and did not relate the experience to any specific teaching, but to Almighty God and His command to discover my true identity.

Then a series of miraculous events happened. I was strongly led to meet Kenneth Walker, a leading member of the Gurdjieff Movement in the UK. I read P.D.Ouspensky's and Maurice Nicholl's books, and was captivated.

Here I felt was an answer about how to live a truly religious life- "The Fourth Way", based on effort, psychological understanding, self observation, Self-remembering and study. I then discovered *"Talks of Ramana Maharshi"* in Watkins bookshop . I now knew where my "WHO AM I" experience had come from, and who was the Master behind my experience, my secret guide, answering my prayer. I read most of the Ramana literature. I stayed with Gurdjieff until 1971.

In 1971, although I was very grateful for all I had learned in the way of spiritual methods, under J.Krishnamurti's influence I realised his critique of hierarchical authoritarian religious organisations was broadly correct, and led to hypocrisy. I followed K earnestly, and attended his talks in England and Switzerland whenever possible. I read his books, practised his choiceless awareness and self observational approach. I had found a living Master and was deeply impressed by his life and spiritual stature. My wife agreed with my new direction, and also attended the talks. I started with another K. devotee a Study Group in London based on K's teachings.

I was still living in my head. My heart was closed for some reason. I became ill for the first time in my life, and on my sick bed my wife gave me a magazine *Yoga and Health* (under K's influence I now attended regular Hatha Yoga classes) and in it was a photo of Ramana and an article on his teaching.

I looked at the picture. It was full of love and compassion, it spoke the answer to my prayer, " Come to me, come to me, you are ready." I now fully recognised that he always had been my true master. I vowed to devote my whole life to Bhagavan and his teaching, to study it and practice it earnestly, surrender to him as best as I could. Around that time my wife died suddenly from an unexpected cerebral hemorrhage. I was devastated but surrendered in faith to Bhagavan and the Will of God. I knew she had not really died, as the Gita says.

I was introduced soon to Jean Klein and Douglas Harding. From these two important teachers I learned the real meaning of Advaita experientially. After a workshop with Douglas at Nacton, I again had the same experience of "WHO AM I?" that welled up very strongly in 1953. My Master Bhagavan confirmed his presence and the practice. I was surprised about how long my preparation with Gurdjieff and Krishnamurti had to have been before

recognising my *full entire* devotion to him. Later that year I was receiving some Alexander Technique lessons, and had the same experience of "WHO AM I?" again. All doubts had been dispersed.

With a few friends, after meeting Lucia Osborne at a Jean Klein meeting, I started a small Ramana Maharshi Study Group in London, and eventually visited India and the Ashram in 1984. Bhagavan had silently led me since my first prayer to God, now to Arunachala and confirmed my practice. I have never swerved from my vow since, and he has taught me "Diving into the Heart" so my sadhana progresses through his infinite Grace. With Jane Adams, the Ramana Foundation at UK and a further visit to Ramanasramam in 1995, I am fully devoted as an instrument in mind, body and spirit, full time to the study and practice of Sri Bhagavan's teachings, in the grip of the Tiger, his continuous Grace never fails, thanks to Almighty God.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–o0o–

Self-knowledge is an easy thing,
The easiest thing there is.
The Self is something that's entirely real
Even for the most ordinary man,
It could be said that a clear gooseberry
Is an illusion by comparison.

The Self, which shines as Sun within the Heart,
Is real and all-pervading, 'Twill reveal
Itself as soon as false thought is destroyed
And not one speck remains. For this thought is
The cause of the appearance of false forms,
The body and the world, which seem to be
Real things in spite of Self, which steadfast stands.
The ever-changeless, firm as Truth itself.
When Self shines forth darkness will be dispersed,
Affliction cease and Bliss alone remains.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

A FOREST IN FLAMES: NOW BURNING OUT

Embers

Though born to wealthy parents who were religious minded, I was disinterested even while young about the comforts of life, but was sincerely yearning and praying fervently to attain the feet of God in this birth itself.

Things were going on smoothly for some years without disruption; but lady fortune deserted the family when I was sixteen years and the greatest tragedy befell when my father left this world suddenly.

This was a turning point in my life as I had to face many difficulties and tribulations. Life became intolerable and at this stage I even started doubting the existence of God.

I wondered, "I was leading a life free from sins, causing harm to none - and why all these sufferings? After seven years of mental agony and bitter experiences in life, a friend of mine casually gave me a book - "Ramana Vijayam" by Suddhananda Bharati. As good luck would have it, after reading this book I decided immediately to visit Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi

I went to the Ashram in the year 1943 . I saw the sage seated in the meditation hall and was simply swallowed up by his benign Grace. This went on for three consecutive days. I now had an urge within, that the Maharshi should shower me with a verbal Blessing. And I was fortunate enough on the fourth day to meet Him when he was coming down the Hill, with only an attendant accompanying him. On seeing me He graciously stopped and looked into me.

In complete surrender I fell at His holy feet. When I stood up, He spoke thus in Tamil: *காட்டுக்குத் தீ வைத்தாகி விட்டது. அது தானே எரிந்து முடியும். இனி கவலைப்பட வேண்டியதில்லை.*

(The forest has been set on fire and it will burn out of its own accord. No need to worry hereafterwards). I took it to mean that the fire of Grace will rout out the vasanas, the residual impressions based on outer seekings.

During early years thoughts arose in my mind simultaneously with at-

tachments to the objects of the thoughts in question; but gradually they now float and fade away without staining the consciousness or leaving a residue. Consequently I felt the mind was becoming lighter and lighter. The dawn of a complete void (not an emptiness) but a void charged with potential energy (a pregnant Stillness) is not far away.

It is happening !

Runam means desire. Arunam is desirelessness. Chala means movement. Achala means nonmovement. Hence desirelessness leads to nonmovement of the mind which is Sivamayam, Arunachala.

May I also take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Ashram Authorities who have always extended their kindness and hospitality during my annual visits to the Ashram since 1943. May Arunachala Ramana shower His Blessings on all of us !

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

-o0o-

The thought 'I am the body' is the string
On which are threaded diverse thoughts like beads
Therefore on diving deep upon the quest
Now 'Who am I and from whence?' thoughts disappear
And consciousness of Self then flashes forth
As the 'I-I' within the cavity
Of every seeker's Heart. And this is Heaven,
This is that Stillness, the abode of Bliss.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

REJOICING IN BHAGAVAN RAMANA

Sarada Natarajan

Interviewers ask me, 'Have you met Ramana? Talked to Him? Listened to his voice? Got drowned in his famed silence? When have you seen him? How?'

I reply"Oh! many times. Bhagavan has blessed me on many occasions to be with him-through the enactment of his life, through singing his glorious life and while mentally dwelling on every event connected with Him. Which shall I tell you about? Let me begin with my performance on stage from the ballet 'Nitya Ramana' depicting an event in Sundaresa Iyer's life...... My heart is heavy as lead. For the past hundred days I have not set eyes on the Sadguru. Why? Have I been unwell? Restrained to stay at home or in bed? No, not physically at least. I have kept away from Sri Ramana out of choice, not force. A trick of the mind, what else could be the cause? I judged myself, worse, judged the Sadguru too. I decided that there had come about no change in me for all my visits to His presence. I remained the same, bogged down by the same pettiness, pulled hither and thither by the same tendencies. A greater calm did not pervade my actions, a verdant love did not burst forth in my heart. Of what use was the daily climb? Asking myself thus, yes judging, weighing the effect of Sri Ramana's presence, I decided to keep away. I sentenced myself to hundred days of hell and darkness. Everything was meaningless. No, I could not take this anymore, but, what would I say if Bhagavan enquired about the reason for my absence? How could I face Him? Yet, I cannot stay away any longer. Every thing reminds me of him, the sun rays playing on the tank, the blooming lotuses, the cool breeze, the sound of devotees chanting 'Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva'... I am not aware of the scorching sun, nor the scalding rocks. I am not aware of having run up and at what pace I climbed. I know only that I am near Skandasramam and seeing me approach, Bhagavan Ramana Himself is getting up and walking to the entrance to welcome me. A dam has broken within me; I hold his feet for dear life and drench them in unending tears. Now he has gently lifted me up and asked why I have not been coming. I blabber the truth, half choked, weeping still, 'Bhagavan ... I thought, it was of no use'. 'What if it was of no use, you felt the difference, did you not?' he asks...

I wonder, 'Did I really feel the intensity of the scene?' I was merely playing a role? Merely acting? Perhaps it was so, much of the time, yet for a split second as I prostrated and got up, almost without my knowing it then, yet surely , like a child being fed by the mother while asleep, I had been with Bhagavan.

Bhagavan had blessed me with many occasions to be with him through the enactment of His life, through singing his story and glory, mentally dwelling on every event.

We have rejoiced at his birth time and again while dancing that glorious moment, while reading and singing of it. We have climbed the Dindigal Fort with him, teased him, banged at the door as he lay sound asleep within, dragged him through the streets after painting his face with charcoal, swam alongside in the Mariamman tank and played on the sandy shores of Koundinya and Vaigai. We have wondered at the sudden transformation in him after the death-experience, shed tears as he picked and ate the rice fallen on the ground on his journey to Arunachala. We have had life giving water poured into our cupped hands by him.

We have shared stale gruel with him and had it sweetened beyond compare by his touch. We have been scorched by his look after errors committed knowingly and unknowingly and burned in the depths of hell. We have revived, bathed by his forgiving, loving glance and danced upon the clouds. I use the plural 'we' because the truth would be testified by all who have 'come' into his fold, in the accepted sense of the term, after mid-April 1950.

Once, a few years back, at Ramanasramam it was the Deepam festival. The devotees were chanting 'Arunachala Siva', sitting close to one another in the eagerness to catch a glimpse of the holy beacon as it is lit. Another flame is lit nearby, very near, warm, ablaze. The chant merging into one voice, tears, choking, everywhere, all around. A slight turn to my right and there he was, Sadguru Ramana. His picture, seated on a tiger-skin on a chair, legs crossed right over the left, one arm placed on his knee, the other holding a palm-leaf fan. They said he would be looking keenly at the beacon. Had he just turned away, not even fully, only a sideward glance cast in my direction? I am taken unawares, swallowed alive. Well, almost. I quickly turn away lest I be finished there and then. I have such a tremendous record for survival

that I escape the glance, at least for the time being. Ah! But happily, he doesn't give up easily, we meet again and again. It was just the other day that I lifted my eyes from work and found the compelling glance on me, a mischievous smile playing on his lips, a smile that was not there the previous time... And then, not so long ago, I walked into the office and there he was standing right in front, facing me, majestic, towering... So awesome that one melted into nothingness. The wonder of the first meeting, yet the familiarity of age-long friendship...

'Excuse me', interrupted one of the interviewers, 'When you say you have been with Bhagavan Sri Ramana at the office the other day, are you referring only to seeing his photograph, or was it a vision of some sort? Were the other occasions you referred to also only what you felt on looking at his picture?

'Don't be misguided into thinking these are just 'photographs', I remonstrated. I am blessed with the recognition that these carry the full power of the Sadguru's presence'. And in those magic moments I have been with him. In the many pictures of the twinkling smile, the enveloping look, the graceful bend of the head, the side-long glance, the quizzical raising of brows, the intent gaze, distant yet near, the shining eyes... A hundred thousand pictures in each one and in each the world itself contained, different every moment, yet ever unchanging.

The interviewers did not seem particularly pleased with my answer. So they insisted, as politely as they could, 'Can you tell us when exactly you came to Ramana?'..... In my mind when I think of Sri Ramana's entry, I get a hazy picture of my having wandered in darkness. Continuously seeking yet not really knowing what is sought. In perpetual movement yet having no destination. When I think of the Sadguru's entry in my life, I realise that it cannot even be called an 'entry'. For, his light must have been with me through all my age-long stumblings. Without it I could not have seen the dinginess of the routes I chose. It had stayed and moved with me, as me, lighting my thought from within, my surroundings from without, making me alive. How then can one put a date to one's first meeting with him? Yet, even like one in a cave notices light only when it streams in as a beam or a shaft, I had not known the presence of the Sadguru until He appeared in the beloved form of Ramana. Hence, to their question I answer, 'I first came to Bhagavan when I was in my mother's womb.' The raised eyebrows ask for

an explanation. ‘My parents were drawn to Bhagavan Ramana even before I was born’. I add. They are satisfied, but continue, ‘Which is your earliest memory related to him?’

The earliest memory? Probably that of Sri Ramanasramam, peacocks in the courtyard, Cow Lakshmi’s samadhi, sitting on the carved elephants at the entrance. Or, if one asks for a clearer mind-picture, satsangs at Delhi, playing outside to run in and join the singing and chanting at the end, Arunachala Siva, Ramanaya Nama Om, Vaazhga Swayam Prakasam, the Vedic chant of ‘Na Karmana’. Then the waving of the arathi flame before Bhagavan’s picture, making those brilliant eyes shine brighter.

Pulling one back from reverie, another question is asked, ‘When was the spark of interest in his teachings first ignited?’.... Strange, there seem to be no sharp boundaries, no clear landmarks on the path that one has professed to having tread for so many years past. Perhaps the talks and the snatches of conversation one heard in passing had prepared the ground, but one was unaware of it. The first time clear mention of a truth transcending the body was made and registered was from a cousin. Then too not in answer to any question of mine did the conversation occur but only to assuage the curiosity of another cousin who insisted on knowing, ‘What do you do when you meditate?’ In an atmosphere that was mostly playful and had no input of earnestness or the spirit of enquiry on our part we were told that the body is not ‘I’. That the Self is unbound and eternal. That to realise this truth is the goal of life and meditation is a means to achieve it! Yet this much was accepted that the body was not ‘I’. Accepted, not as a living truth, but mentally, intellectually.

No experience flashed at that moment. In a way, it mattered little, for His presence worked its magic anyway, by making me declare that Self-knowledge was my goal and Bhagavan was my Sadguru, that I would therefore pursue self-enquiry to the best of my ability thence forth. To begin with I almost led myself into believing in the need for a ‘living guru’. Although I had already felt Bhagavan ever so often, I did not then recognise this and hence the confusion. How many times must I have tried to run away [One cannot run away from someone one has not met or known]. And how many times has He refused to let go, making me stay even without being aware. The next time I tried to make good my escape was a few years earlier.Till then

I was fairly content to pursue self-enquiry, which I had presumed to have understood. The understanding was that the body was not 'I'. No reasoning was expended in this direction as to why this was so. The mystery had for the most part already been unravelled by Bhagavan. It is the 'I' thought, the feeling of individuality which links itself with other thoughts by bestowing attention on them. When the 'I' shifts attention, the existing thought fades and the new thought comes alive. So it was understood that the mind is a set of thoughts to which the 'I' - thought gives attention and hence, life. To know the 'I', one must focus attention on it and not on the related thoughts. This could be done by asking oneself 'who am I?', whereby other thoughts would disappear, or else by watching thoughts. In this manner I continued to pursue self-enquiry for a few years. This was a process restricted to a few minutes in a day. The connection between self-enquiry and life as a whole was not contemplated upon. Like so many things it was taken for granted, taken to be understood. So long as other activities of life were sufficiently interesting and engaging nor major upheavals resulted.

Yet,one fine day one found oneself at the cross roads again. Perhaps it was the fact that one phase of student life had been left behind and one was unsure of the next. Or else, it may have been the unacknowledged impact of the repeated nagging of 'friends'. All this is mere conditioning they said, 'there is no such thing as the Self'. I dismissed them saying everything was a result of conditioning, from eating and sleeping habits to the entire mode of life, why should this not be? Yet, it was not exactly the right answer. Bhagavan had shattered all possible scepticism by experiencing truth in a sudden flash. With no background or awareness of the scriptures, not even having heard the word 'Self', he became aware of it and remained steadily in the awareness. What greater proof was required that this was the natural state, totally beyond the realm of conditioning? The truth, in fact, was the other way round, that it was conditioning that kept us from being Self-aware. This logic, however, came to me only later. And for the time I chose a different path to disprove the theory of conditioning. Throwing myself into the pursuit of what was normally termed 'pleasure' I reached dead-ends at every turn and finally returned convinced that Self-knowledge was the only real option. All this running around, however, had blunted the already not too sharp edge of self- enquiry and the usual foe of judgement raised its head. I was once more into Sundaresa Iyer's hundred days. Again I did not pause to ask whether self-enquiry had been properly understood and pursued, but

presumed to wonder whether it was the right way for me.

Bhagavan came to me again, re-lit the path and kept me to it. He came easily, as a 'friend' in the form of Viswanatha Swami. First he opened the door to the magic garden of source-attention. The twin blade of self- enquiry, 'whence am I?' gave new meaning to the search. All thoughts were dependent on the 'I' - thought, but the 'I' - thought itself was no independent entity. It was merely a reflection of the Self from which it derived consciousness, into which it disappeared in deep sleep and from which it arose recharged on waking. In self-enquiry so far I had spent my energies in trying to isolate the 'I' - thought by cutting away at other thoughts. Now the direction was different, attention was focussed on the source, on the spiritual heart to the right of the chest. I was assured that it did not matter if such focussing was intellectual to begin with, it would get established as experience at the right time. It was also brought home to me that the source is ever available to turn to, either through self-enquiry or by tracing the mantra to its origin and holding on. Gently, yet insistently I was reminded that self-enquiry was not a part time job, that all energy must be directed to the search for Self. Not that I should drop all assigned duties. That would be getting the picture wrong. In fact, I once wrote to him before an examination that I was in no mood to study as it was sheer waste of time. He quietly reprimanded me with the reminder that Bhagavan had always insisted on total attention to the task on hand. Mischievously he added that he hoped his letter would reach in time to avert disaster. I read only recently in Ramana Sahasranama that Bhagavan disliked weeping. How often has Kunju Swami laughed away my blues, by helping me laugh at myself too. Or through the intense question. 'Does the sky have any problems? You are not this, you are the Self. What are you bemoaning?' More often simply by radiating happiness, or deep joy escaping in tears at the corners of the eyes, but quickly rubbed away lest they be found out. I had nothing to give, everything to receive. But then that was Bhagavan's way, for as I was told 'Bhagavan never sends anyone back empty handed.' At the same time Bhagavan pretends that we too are contributing something, that we are not getting his infinite bounty absolutely free. Hence the insistence on keeping up our side of the bargain. Through Viswanatha Swami, he reminded me time and again that self attention must be continuous, not at the expense of daily duties, but by giving 'all spare time' to it.

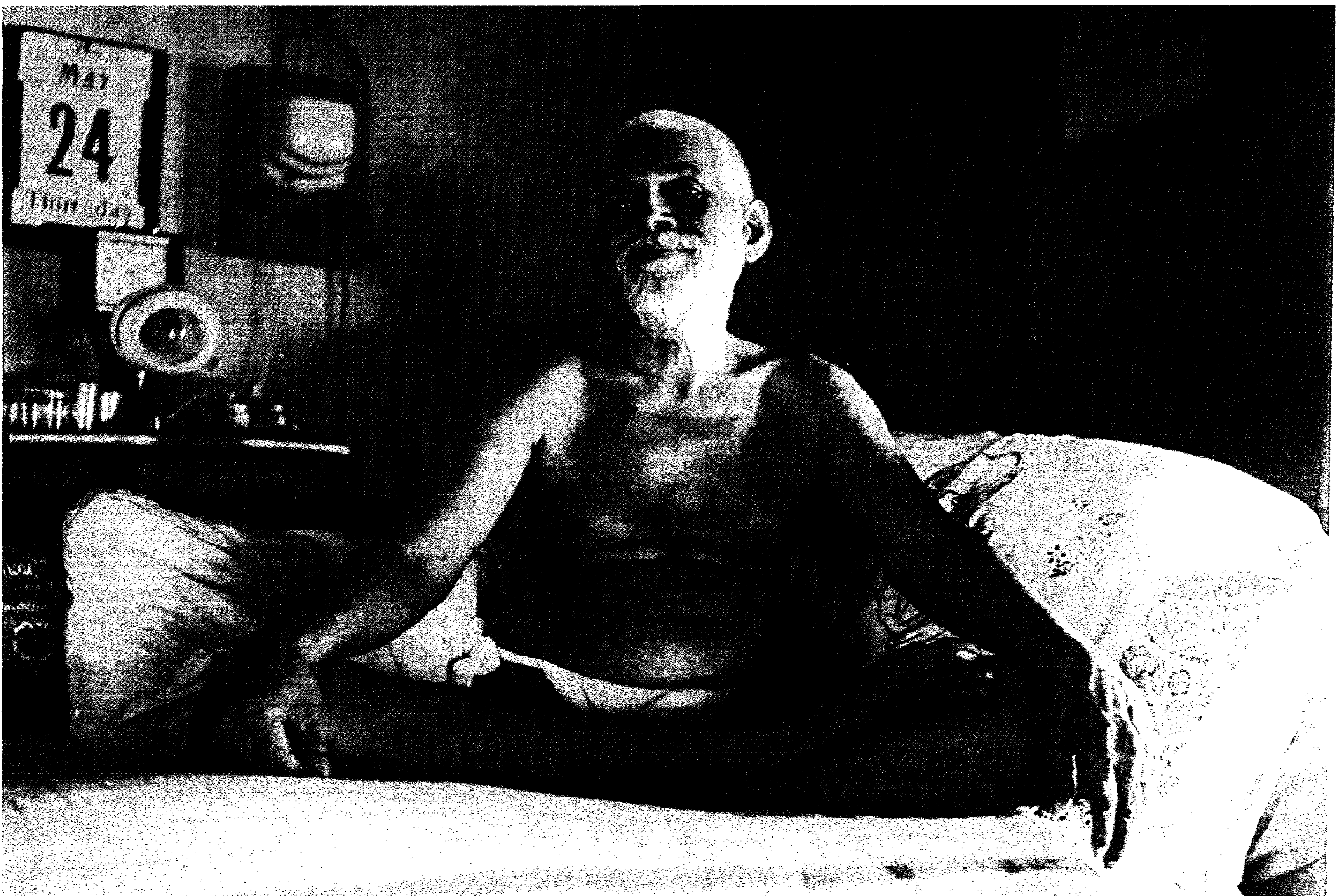
The excitement of these fresh insights made one pursue the path with keen interest. There was the challenge of adventure when it begins. Yet, as time wore on one grew accustomed to the reassuring presence. The sadguru teased me through Kunju Swami, 'Ah! You have no time to stay. You are always in a hurry. He demonstrated the perfect ease of one who has' nothing to do' when I caught him, I presumed, asleep, legs stretched on the arms of an easy-chair. He demonstrated the absolute alertness of one who has nothing to do by welcoming me the very next moment, perfectly awake as if he had just been waiting for me vigilantly. Yes, often I have met Sadguru Ramana in the ' wide awake' buoyancy, the perfect clarity and joy that emanates from all those who have savoured his presence. They live him, they radiate him and I get to taste of that wonder too.

I seem to live in the equatorial region where it rains everyday, the downpour of Bhagavan's grace. His presence is everywhere, at all times. Hence He makes his presence obvious ever performing the twin role of the sadguru. One, drawing within so gently that one is unaware and pushing from without so obviously that one is wonderstruck. For such is the Ramana suffused atmosphere that he has blessed me with. His own shrine of grace so close to home which I can go whenever 'in turmoil' or when I wish to share my laughter. Work through the Ramana Movement which gives me repeated opportunities to think, read, talk, sing and dance of his glory and dwell on his teaching.

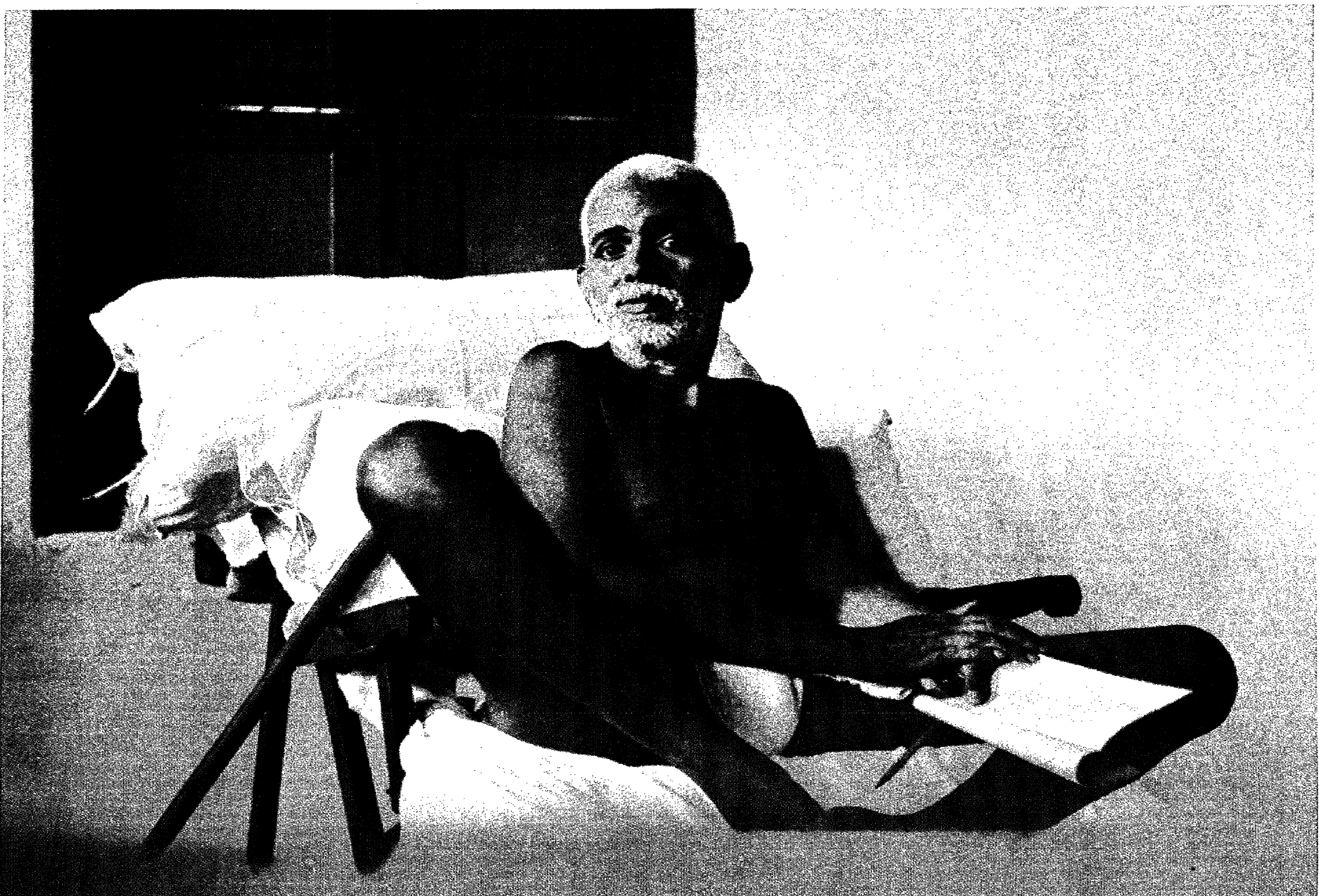
Thus having the sea of grace within, without, ever-available being reassured of its presence so often, why does one still get parched again and again? When Ramana is the very Self why do I be with him and part too? How can I be parted from the Self? Though not in fact, through the illusion of limitation I have imagined myself separate from the Self and thus have parted. In wonder and beauty and love, in truth and joy and peace, I have glimpsed the Self. And so I have met Sadguru Ramana. It is time to take a deep breath, to cut away all illusion with one fiery stroke of enquiry, and dive into the Self, into Ramana through the inward pull of Grace. Then one would remain no more to meet or to part. To part no more, to abide and sport ever "in the vast expanse of Bliss that knows no day, no night".

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

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With Pranams from: Kappa Electricals, Madras



With Pranams from: A. R. Natarajan, Sulochana, Sarada

JOURNEY TO ARUNACHALA JOURNEY TO MYSELF

A. C. W

My visiting India and the discovery of the Maharshi are one and the same. Events throughout my life, seemingly haphazard at the time, and occasionally unwanted, have been beautifully arranged so that I could follow a spiritual enquiry that would eventually prepare me for and lead me to Arunachala.

My husband and I set out for India several years ago. We had settled in a European university town after a few years working in Asia. Although I had used my vacations to travel widely while in Asia, I had never visited India. My husband had been here once, for a couple of months, and had left feeling that he would one day return.

On arriving in India, we visited some Buddhist pilgrim sites, attending a three-week intensive meditation retreat that was held in silence. On the way, we shared an astonishingly crowded train with a vivacious Hungarian woman who spoke abstractedly about a holy hill somewhere in South India. It sounded remote, exotic and wild, and had an unpronounceable name.

Some weeks later we travelled South - I thought I had arrived in paradise! That was the beginning of my love affair with Tamil Nadu. The further we travelled into the state, the more at home I felt. I was moved and awed by the majesty of the great temples, captivated by the colour and vibrancy of street life, and delighted by the green paddy fields dotted with graceful palm-trees; most striking of all, a sense of the sacred permeated everyday life. Even the diet suited me.

In Madras, we discovered that Tiruvannamalai did indeed exist and could be reached by bus. When we pulled into the town, all the other passengers got out, and we thought we should do the same, but the driver motioned for us to stay. He then drove the empty bus to the Ashram. We were so green, we did not know that this was the Ashram of Sri Ramana Maharshi, whose books we had been reading at home, nor did we have much idea of what 'ashram' meant. Knowing that some temples do not permit entry to non-Hindus, we were nervous that our presence might cause offense. We en-

tered the grounds rather timidly, and like so many thousands before, I was deeply struck by the sense of profound peace and sanctity.

Inadvertently, we had arrived on the day of a major festival, so the Ashram was full. A man who had been observing us, stepped forward and very sweetly guided us to the Samadhi Hall and the Old Hall. He was extremely kind and unassuming, and gently spoke a few words about the essence of Bhagavan's teaching, of presence, and the beauty of a leaf as it catches the light of the sun. The bare simplicity of what and how he spoke, struck deep within and there was a thrill of recognition; heart speaking to heart.

We found accommodation on a local roof, in full view of Arunachala, and discovered that we had arrived on 'Sivaratri'. My notion of Siva was somewhat hazy! Later, I understood what a blessing it was to come to the feet of Arunachala-Siva on such an auspicious day. The potency and intensity of the atmosphere was such that I would automatically and frequently be falling into meditation.

Most days, we spent hours at the temple, finding quiet spots to sit, overcome by stillness, despite the crowds of devotees and boisterous festival activities. An Englishman staying at the same house as us, and a devotee for twenty years, plugged some of the gaps of our ignorance, explaining the significance of the place we had come to, Sivaratri and *giri-pradakshina.*

We left Tiruvannamalai on a handsome steam-train bound for Madurai. As the train wound its way sedately across the sacred land, I knew I had found something exquisite and precious. I also recognized that a deep and unshakeable love for this country had taken root.

Our next connection with the Maharshi came a year or so later. Our odyssey through India and her sacred traditions continued. During a stay in an ashram near Tiruchi, a woman approached us, and handing over a slim book, said, 'I thing you might be interested in this.' It was called *The Secret of Arunachala.* Did she know that in two days we were due to leave for our second trip to Arunachala?

Fascinated, we read the story of Swami Abhishiktananda, the Belgian monk. Although a devout Catholic, he had become more and more attracted to the Maharshi, and stayed frequently on the Hill.

The days and hours leading up to our meeting with Sri Poonjaji were marked by great anticipation, excitement and emotion. This flowed over when I was in the room, sitting in front of a large, exquisite portrait of Bhagavan. A cassette of *Aksharamanamalai* was playing in an otherwise silent room. As I gazed at the picture, I knew, quite simply, that there was ultimate truth, ultimate love and ultimate beauty.

The final link in the chain had been provided, and since then, we have been moved and blessed to visit Tiruvannamalai again and again. Each visit has been longer and more engaging. Slowly, we have explored the Hill, the temple, the *pradakshina* route, the Ashram environment, the literature on Bhagavan and become familiar with the rituals and pujas. Throughout all these, the silence resounds, connects, unites; Bhagavan's analogy of the *sruti* note that is constant and ever-present, has come to have more and more meaning in my life.

Returning to Arunachala after a period away is a joy beyond expression. Sometimes I ask, 'What is my favourite thing about being here?' There is such a 'rightness' about everything here, whether it is the unhurried but dedicated performance of the pujas throughout the day, the care extended to plant and animal life, or the *satvic* food served, so punctually in Bhagavan's smooth-floored dining-hall.

One of the greatest aspects of the Ashram is the utter freedom visitors are given - if you like chanting and singing *bhajans*, you may do so; if you want to sit silently in the meditation hall all day, you may; if you prefer to sit in the library poring over Bhagavan's literature, nobody will stop you; and if you wish to get up at odd hours of the night to walk around the Hill, well, go ahead! The other day I was talking to an elderly man from Delhi on a two-month tour of ashrams and pilgrim sites in the South. I asked him how he was enjoying his stay in the Ashram, 'O very much,' he replied. 'I have enjoyed all places, but here is the best: *here they leave you alone!'* This sums up the unique quality of Ramanasramam, and is also a beautiful example of Bhagavan's approach in action - each person is given all necessary space and support to find their own path and to conduct their own enquiry. In this way, a kind of spiritual maturity is fostered and a responsibility for one's own *sadhana*.

When I am physically away from Arunachala, my thoughts are focused on it much more often. For example, after my last visit, for months I would look at my watch around 6.45 every morning and think 'Ah, milk offering time.' On waking, I would immediately think of Bhagavan and a mental image might accompany the thought. I would feel the hours and days guided and blessed by his grace and presence in numerous and unexpected ways.

I not only feel extraordinarily lucky to have come across the ultimate teacher and teaching. Though Bhagavan constantly reminds us to go beyond form, I find that in coming to the Ashram, there is a sense of coming to the very heart of Him. Every moment that is passed in this awareness, every step trodden on the holy ground, brings inspiration and an opportunity to awaken.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

What is the use of knowing everything
Except the Self? What else is there to know?
For anyone when Self, Itself, is known?
On realising in oneself the Self,
Which is the only self-effulgent One
In myriad of selves, the Light of Self
Will clearly shine within. This is indeed
The true display of Grace, the ego's death,
And the unfolding of the Bliss Supreme.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

HIS TRANSFORMING PRESENCE

Joan Greenblatt

I was first drawn to Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi over twenty-five years ago, through a remarkable photograph of his. At that time, I experienced a feeling of coming home to something that was always a part of me. Initially, I devoured every book on his life and teaching, being both fascinated and charmed. For almost a year I read the small booklet *Who Am I?* on a daily basis, letting the words sink in. I don't think I truly intellectually understood the import of the words but my heart began to open in a deep and profound way. In times of silence and attentiveness, the recognition of "Who Am I?" became more of an intuitive experience, beyond the realm of thought.

During this period, Bhagavan the person, held me in his grip through his profound humanity, compassion, soft doe-like eyes, and great wisdom which provides each individual with what is most needed at that moment. The events of his life were fascinating: spontaneous realization, austere life in caves upon the hill, and immense compassion - ultimately manifesting in the form of an Ashram that grew around him. His was a life of true perfection and grace, both inwardly and outwardly.

Over the course of years the transformation of who Bhagavan Ramana was to me, began its process. His presence became my real presence; his message the light of inner understanding. Bhagavan was beginning to melt and merge in my own being. The boundaries of his physical manifestation, the teachings, and his eternal existence were becoming one. When people ask how I could have a Guru who is not in the body, it always puzzles me. Ramana was not the body even when he was alive. What difference could there be when his outer shell simply dropped away.

Looking upon Him as the Self of all - the Beingness that pervades everything, has not diminished the love and gratitude I feel for Him. Rather, it has provided transcendence into a relationship with one's own Heart. In the end we travel the path alone. Bhagavan is here to show us the path and guide us along.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–o0o–

CLOUDS AND THE RED MOUNTAIN

Priyadevi

It was Prema who introduced us, and of all her gifts to me this was the finest. We had been talking, and in the course of our conversation I had remarked how refreshing it would be to sit without having to say a word in the presence of a master. Prema had smiled. A few days later without telling me what to expect, she drove us up into North Arcot. It was high noon. Arunachalam shimmered with a startling clarity in the heat. Prema left me gently at the meditation room.

I remember its welcome cool. The soft black flagstones worne by many feet held puddles of melted sunlight. Outside, the yellowed neem leaves drifted and spun. Beyond were the samadhis of the animals He had loved. Then Arunachalam began. I remember the rich timbre of the silence and a welcome sense of time dropping away. His portrait smiled. Whimsically, quizzically, almost. Abstracted but very much present. Effortlessly serene. And totally without compromise. Then the teaching began.

Instinctively, one oriented oneself to the open doorway filled with light and the presence of Arunachalam. He led one to the centre. In meditation He entered into one, remarkable for its purity and precision. He helped one recognise the delicate poise between spontaneity and restraint. Like a good host puts you immediately at ease when he shares a particularly fine perspective with you, he warned against excess of astonishment or delight. This after all, was real. This was oneself - unclouded, free. This was the nature of things, of all things. How could one have forgotten? How could one forget?

The teaching continued. Up at the cave, he demonstrated how in the light of this reality all other "crisis" resolve themselves, just as a catalyst precipitates further solutions. This was in the autumn of 1983. It was to be twelve years before we returned, much water under the bridge and many cloudscapes later. The death of a father. The delight of living on the Ganga at Kashi wrapped in its ritual sunrise, the spin and drift of neem leaves, the well in the courtyard. The painful readjustments of return... I am a slow learner...

The beacon of Arunachalam shone white into the night of Kritika as we

sped towards it; in the clear light of the day the meditation room was as it always has been.

The master was as generous and as uncompromising in his teaching: So, He seemed to say, you are back again? And how much closer to your self are you now, than you were then? As simple and clear as a rain - washed sky one looked at the question. And the question looked back at one. Bland and penetrating.

Well then, he seemed to say, you know what you must do. Go deeper. And stay with it. He smiled, and this time he sent me away with a preliminary exercise in maya:

As clouds suddenly appear and disappear in a clear sky, so this entire universe appears and disappears into the Self.

Yogavasisthasara 2:20

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–o0o–

In order that the bonds of destiny
And all its kindred may at last be loosened,
And so that one may also be released
From the dread cycle of birth and death,
This path than others is far easier,
Therefore be still and keep a silent hold
On tongue and mind and body. That which is
The Self-effulgent will arise within
This is the Supreme Experience. Fear will cease.
This is the boundless sea of Perfect Bliss!

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

A GARLAND OF POEMS

Maurice Frydman

MAURICE FRYDMAN [Swami Bharatananda] 1900 to 1976, was born in Poland. Engineer by profession, he spent his early years in Paris until destiny drew him to India, where he found himself 'at home'. His religious propensities as an ardent seeker, took him to the portals of great men like Mahatma Gandhi, J. Krishnamurti, Swami Ramdas, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi whom he first met around 1935. He was a regular week-end visitor to the Maharshi's Ashram during the early years and had been an in-mate for a few years in the latter part of his life. In the course of his stay, he composed simple and elegant verses on Bhagavan Sri Ramana and wrote them in the note-book, kept in the Ashram. The following verses are drawn from the archives of Sri Ramanasramam.

To Sri Ramana Maharshi

18 - 10 - 1934

Full of loving pride, I came to India
To serve this country to my utmost strength
Now I am ashamed and deeply humble
Having been served gloriously and first

30 - 12 - 1934

The blackened face of a child in the joyful flame
The white bones in the embrace of the glowing coal
The mysterious drum beating to tune in the brain
The awful Dancer, the last and ultimate goal. (1)

The glory of having dreamed a terrible dream
The triumph of having awakened again
Only to fall asleep once more
And awaken again, again and again. (2)

Many dreams have I dreamed
full of pain and of joy
Many times, half awakened did
I weep over them
To fall asleep once more and
to dream the same dreams
Oh! the terrible agony of Eternal return (3)

Oh, my Lord, my Beloved
I am only a mask
You have put on yourself for
the fun of the play
Full of Bliss, you enjoy to see
on your face
By looking on the mirror of Life
through my eyes (4)

To play better the game I forgot who I am
And assumed all the shapes forms and names
For your pleasure I made a fool of myself
To make you smile I have wept in despair and in joy (5)

I have played the rock and water and fire
I have played the tree and flower and beast
I have played the Savage, the beggar, the priest
The rich and the poor, the woman and man (6)

And now I play at being tired to play
I forgot how to enjoy forgetfulness
I am tired to feel tired with the toil of ages
I am fed up with the satisfaction of all desires (7)

So long have I been on the stage to please thee
My eyes are blinded by the lights of the play
My ears are deafened by the roaring thunders
of thy laughter
My heart is turned to ashes by the flames of
dreamy sorrows (8)

My Lord, to please thee, I have made
a fool of myself
And now I am unable to stop the agony
of play
My Lord, drag me down from the stage
I have forgotten where is the
way in and out. (9)

ANSWER

31 - 12 - 1934

My child, our play is an end in itself
And it comes to an end when you see it as play
You are never on stage never am I apart
Yours are the sorrows, the endurance is mine
I the bliss in your joy and in your tears
For your sake I have made a fool of myself
I play the sun and the earth and yours thereon
I am yours body and mind, their hopes and desires
I am everything you think are not
And when you think you are this I am also the same
The play ceases to be when you see it as play
The world ceases to be when you see it as me
Unless we go on for the sake of the fun
You the eye in my Heart watching my play
Come down the stage keep quiet and still
I will remain alone and continue your game
I will take up your shape and voice and name
I will weep with your tears and laugh with your joys
For your sake, I will play the King, Queen and the Court
The beggar, the dog, the child and the Lord
In search of you I will weep and suffer and toil
I will turn black the white Sun and- white the black Sky

14 - 01 - 1935

If you are the Truth, I was blindly searching
Please take me home
If you are the Light-that shines in darkness
Please take me home
Because I see that night is madness
I must be free
Because I see that Life is dreaming
I must be free
Because I see that joy is painful
I must be free
Because I see that there is freedom
I must be free

15 - 06 - 1935

My Lord, I am tired and the night black
The path no more seen under the rock
The way back is barred and a wall in the front
The soil under me is but crumbling stone
I don't know where I am nor where I go
My divine seducer, you have enticed me to start
This perilous climbing with no hope of return
Now you have got me blind, helpless and lost
Entirely at your mercy, you can do what you like
Nothing more can be done by me or with me:
I am at the end of the tether and can't break the cord
All my going ahead is a deceitful dream
All my thinking not true, all my feeling nor pure,
All my doing not right, all my living not clear
I am tied to myself by myself through myself
The knot out of reach. I am in your hands
You have caught me where I am and there I remain
As long as you like, Nothing I am
There is a Heart and a mind, and a body and soul
Waiting for you. You will come when you choose
And whatever you like you are welcome to do.

11 - 10 - 1935

Don't help me, because thy power is infinite
Make me suffer that I may learn to love
Make me lonely that I may find the one
Make me wayless, that I may come to Thee
I pray for thy Supreme pity being without pity
For the Supreme mercy of thy mercilessness
For the sleepless watchfulness of Thy unforgiving love
Leave me helpless and weak amidst the storms of thy creation
Blind in the darkness on the shores of Thy Eternity
That I may grope and stumble and fall and find my end in Thee.

27 - 10 - 1935

Born on the shores of Eternal Silence
I was rushing happily amongst the rocks
Whirling stones and playing with pebbles
Joyful and innocent, rapid and shallow (1)

I have entered the fertile plains of satisfaction
Murmuring amongst the high banks of my welcome
My fishes and frogs fed on the corpses of the riverside (2)
I have passed through the hollow desert of despair
Losing all my waters and leaving the white bones of my
children in the river bed (3)

Starved, I have entered the low valleys of opulence
Greedily collecting steams, destroying banks and
inundating villages (4)

Heavy with the mud of many lands I was flowing lazily
Making obstacles of myself out of my unholy accumulations
Wasting myself into many pools, sleeping in the glaring Sun (5)

The despair of a putrified death has poisoned every drop of my being
The indifference of the inevitable decay has stopped
the flow of life (6)

Suddenly I awakened to the freshness of endless beauty
And felt the eternal movement of infinite peace (7)

In my death I have found my life and in my
decay my resurrection (8)

My Beloved I have found you, and yet never
were we separated (9)

From eternity to eternity you are receiving the
muddy waters of my life and feeding the
snowy womb of my mountainous mother (10)

Every drop of my being is you and yours is
the force of my flow
Never are we apart and yet I always strive
after you without having lost you even for a second (11)

Keep me with you, my Beloved, do not make me
think of my riverhood
Let the waters of life flow and bring their sorrowful gifts
I may remain in your immensity while rolling the stones
from the mountains feeding and frog
destroying and building (12)

The flow of creation will go on
With me or without me
Only do not make me forget that I am none and
that only you exist and create
In your ever-changing immobility (13)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–o0o–

ARUNACHALA

Kitty Osborne

Living as we do at the end of the 20th century we have become accustomed to the idea of speed and change being fundamental to our lives. Indeed, in most of the western world the only means of assessing success is by charts showing growth and change. In India this is not quite so ubiquitous as this is a country where people live in different centuries on the same street and here it is not quite so hard to accept that some things are well-nigh eternal.

In Tiruvannamalai we live at the foot of an eternal mountain. One of the less known stories about the origin of Arunachala is still my favourite. Long, long ago at the dawn of time when the world was new, there lived a great sage who was wise and very powerful. Every day he worshipped Lord Siva with prayer, with fasting and with invocations, but as time passed he grew increasingly troubled for deep in his heart he knew doubt. What proof was there after all that God really existed? Maybe the whole business of prayer and worship with all its ritual was just an invention of man. An illusion that we have created for ourselves to pacify our inner urge for divinity. So the sage became more and more tormented, and he prayed:

"Oh Lord Siva, if you really exist, then let me see you. If I can see you then I will believe; if you are not an illusion show yourself to me."

There was no immediate reply to his plea and so the sage performed great tapas for many years, never ceasing his demand to God. And at last he had a reward. The Lord Siva appeared to him in a dream and said:

"You have performed great austerities in order to see me. But man cannot see God in his true form so I have come to you in a dream. Ask any other boon of me and I shall grant it."

The sage thought this over..... And he declined.

"How do I know," he asked "that this is not just a dream? I have thought of you ceaselessly for many years and this could be the result of my wishful thinking. Many people dream strange and wonderful things. No. If you really exist then I want to see you as you are.... otherwise I cannot believe in God. For the ages I have spent thinking only of You. I deserve a better

answer than this."

Years passed.

More years passed, with the sage still insisting on his right to see God and still performing the most rigorous tapas in order to get his wish fulfilled. And then at last a day came when his demand was answered. Lord Siva appeared to him... as a blinding column of light.

The mortal had to cover his face in order not to be destroyed by the vision of God's might. He threw himself to the ground and begged forgiveness for his doubts, and yet, while prostrate and vulnerable before the Lord, he had the temerity to say:

"Oh Lord Siva, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for at last granting my wish, for enabling me at last to believe in you with a whole heart. But how many people can perform tapas as I have done for countless years? Many people have doubts as I did. As Life is difficult enough for us as it is, is it fair for God to remain always invisible to us? Should we all believe as an act of faith alone without any assistance? You with all your powers could surely give us a bit of help in our difficult path."

And Lord Siva replied:

"Yes well, you may have a point there. And you deserve some recognition for the steadfast way you have prayed to me for so long."

There was a momentous pause before the Lord spoke once more:

"For your sake and for the benefit of those who come after you I will become a mountain in this place, and all who wish to see Me may come and worship Me here at Arunachala until the end of time."

And so for centuries people have come to Arunachala to worship God.

Bhagavan came for the Mountain and many people came for Bhagavan.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

COMMENT ON THE PARTING NOTE

T. S. Vaidyanathan

The parting note left by Bhagavan is well known to devotees. The most comprehensive analysis of the note is to be found in the book by Sri B. V. Narasimha Swami where he analyses the note very carefully and thoroughly. The razor sharp intellect of BVN with the superior thinking powers of a leading advocate aided by a fund of scriptural knowledge both Biblical and Vedic makes a thorough analysis of the parting note. The value of BVN's analysis of the parting note can be understood by the fact that Bhagavan Himself refers to it in a court deposition (where Bhagavan replies to the question by the lawyer about why Bhagavan does not sign His name saying that the author of Self Realization has furnished the answer to this question). There Bhagavan Himself establishes the validity of the relevant portions of the analysis.

The purpose of this note is to raise the attention of the reader about an aspect of the note which even the microscopic vision of BVN appears to have overlooked. That aspect of the note is only very briefly commented upon by BVN based on some circumstantial evidence. For our analysis we will make almost the same assumptions of Bhagavan's state of mind as made by BVN which are that He was in a hurry and possessed by a great frenzy of mind. The note read before revised insertion of a clause, reads as follows in English.

"I am leaving this place as per his orders. This has entered into a good enterprise. Hence nobody need grieve over this enterprise. To see this money need not be spent.

Your fee has not yet been paid. Two rupees are enclosed herewith.

Thus,

———

The above is more or less accurate translation of the original Tamil by Bhagavan. I have slightly changed the English translation of BVN. This will be the starting point of the analysis. Now this is the letter that Bhagavan was leaving behind before leaving His home. This is what we may call the first draft of Bhagavan's note.

When we draft a note we do so with the assumptions of our knowledge. After that we read the draft with the assumptions of the reader's knowledge. So from His own knowledge point of you the above is *all* the note that Bhagavan wrote. After writing this note Bhagavan must have read with the intention of finding out what sense the note is going to make to those who are to learn of His departure through it. Now He knows what the reader does not know. What does Bhagavan know? Bhagavan knows the person by whose orders HE is living. What about the reader? Will he not raise the question "What orders?" Whose orders? Is it Pokri Mani's order? Or that other friends order? Who could it be who lured Him away? What is this enterprise? Has he got a job in a merchant ship or theatrical troupe which Bhagavan expects to be prosperous financially? What a quagmire of possibilities the above plain note would raise for His family. But as for Bhagavan the person was more familiar than Pokri Mani, Bhagavan's own Brothers and numerous other acquaintances of His. He knew exactly Whose order it was. That person was very very familiar to Him. In fact Bhagavan knew Him more intimately than Bhagavan knew the closest of His school teachers. That is precisely why Bhagavan left it as self-evident self explanatory "his order". Some people have opined that Seshadri Swamigal who was a yogi must have telepathically sent the orders which must have been acknowledged by Bhagavan as his orders. This cannot be true . Because the chronology of facts shows that Bhagavan never sought anyone seeking what further orders that person had to give. Had it been Seshadri Swamigal He would become His disciple and waited on Swamigal. That didn't happen. Was it the Moolavar of Arunachala Temple or the Arunachala Hill itself which is said to be wisdom in the form of a Hill. Moolavar because Bhagavan went and hugged Him and reported His arrival etc. But remember that Bhagavan took three years to pay his second visit to Moolavar. Hence we have to conclude that Moolavar didn't broadcast the "Come" message to Bhagavan at Madurai. What about the Arunachala Hill? That must surely be the right answer. Has not Guhai Namasivayar sung that Jnana tapodanarai "Va" endru azhaikkum malai? (The hill that says 'come') So it must be Arunachala Hill. Now I maintain that even this apparently satisfactory answer is not strictly correct. You may ask why. Arunachala Hill is not the correct answer. For the simple reason that Arunachala Hill is bound to call every wise peacock, deer, crow, dog, saint, Deva,tapasvi etc. As a token of recognition of their jnana, from Cow Lakshmi to Thiru Jnana Sambandar were all called by the Hill to

acknowledge the jnana of the person called. Very few of the people called recognised that the Hill was calling. Some total ajnanis have also been called by Hill because of its innate goodness which is so great that Hill doesn't discriminate between a jnani and an ajnani.

Coming back to the parting note. When Bhagavan read it after writing it, He clearly saw the confusion arising in the reader's mind as to who "his order" refers to. Bhagavan made an insertion sign and added

"I am leaving this place (in search of my father) as per (in search of my father and his orders) his orders. This has entered into a good enterprise. Hence nobody need grieve over this enterprise. To see this money need not be spent."

Here Bhagavan is helping the reader with a few clues so that the reader may not have infinite possibilities to guess whose orders. Even here Bhagavan has set a very interesting trap. He is seeking his father. We must assume it is not physical father who had passed away sometime ago. Here Bhagavan has given a clear hint about religious nature of his quest perhaps seeking the Heavenly Father for comfort or what have you etc. But the trap is interesting. He is portraying Himself as a seeker. This, entirely for the consumption of the reader because the idea of seeking is totally absent in note as initially written. Later, realizing the ambiguity of "his orders" He qualifies the 'his' as a Fatherly Figure whom the religious type seek. So the worry of Bhagavan going to a merchant ship or joining a theatrical group in Cochin are really not there. The person is a Father-like being. He won't allow harm to come to me. That much is sure. But the word seeking is very very interesting in terms of what we see Bhagavan actually do. He didn't search to find out who the leading saintly personalities of Tiruvannamalai are.

Now I am going to advance my own theory as to the identity of that person. We have three clues to the identity of that person. One is that Bhagavan, knew Him very very intimately. The ordinary, "him" is not a typing mistake. At this point we only know it is he and not a she. He has used Avar which is used for any respectable Male person. Beyond that we do not know the identity.

Clue number two comes from a conversation reported in talks. A learned Telugu gentleman raises some learned questions about swagatiya bheda, such

s Brahman is beyond swagatiya and other Bheda etc. The details are not nportant but Bhagavan's reply is a very very important clue to the identity f the person. Bhagavan replies "Dakshinamurti never taught anything of that ind." His vein is the same as you and I. When discussing a math problem we nay say, " no no " Dr. Krishnan did not teach that. " That is not important for he examination." While talking thus the directness and intimacy with which ve speak of Dr. Krishnan in the same way Bhagavan says "Dakshinamurti ever taught anything like that" Who knows? Could it be Dakshinamurti who ransmitted the telepathic orders to come to Arunachala? Wrong again. He s a mouna Guru. Never makes least ripple of disturbance. Hence whoever hat great soul may be it can't be Dakshinamurti. Who could it be then? I vill give one more clue. His last name is Yogi. His First name rhymes with Arunachala but is not Arunachala. Major Chadwick asks Bhagavan "Who is Arunagiri Yogi?" Bhagavan succinctly replied "Who is He but GOD".

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

-o0o-

Annamalai, the Transcendental One,
That is the Eye behind the eye of mind,
Which eye and other senses cognize,
Which in their turn illuminate the Sky,
And all the other elements as well,
That is again the Spirit-sky in which
The mind-sky doth appear, That shines within
The Heart which is of every thought quite free,
And with gaze fixed within remains as That;
Annamalai, the Self-effulgent shines.
But Grace is needed most. So faithful be
Unto the Self and Bliss will then result.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

IN MEMORIAM

The Holy Cow, Lakshmi

Passed into the Light on 18th June, 1948 at 11.30 A.M.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

Before the Golden Sage who reigneth still
At the wide foot of the celestial Hill
Arunachala-lord of the Beacon Light,
I bow in reverence, then rise to write
This song about the Cow who, ere she died,
Was by His touch of mercy defied
And set among the Immortals who continue
To breathe as Light within me and within you.

Lord of Grace! thy holy Name resounds
From end to end; thy Mercy knows no bounds,
Thy Power no limitation! Through thy Peace
The struggles of thy seekers slowly cease
Leaving a large contentment in the heart:
Before thy luminous Presence glooms depart,
Clouds vanish ... In the stillness of thine eyes
The all-unseeing fool grows sudden wise,
The ignorant grow learned. With a smile
Thou canst redeem us in a fleeting while,
Rendering our lives significant. O thou
Who wearest realisation on thy brow
Even as a jewel! with what master-ease
Thou dost immortalise thy devotees!

And thou art worshipped everywhere by all
Who, touched by thy deep Grace, have heard thee call
And gathered at thy Feet: numerous shapes
Of peacocks, squirrels, deer, and dogs and apes,
Of cows and men. And from them thou dost draw
Thy chosen few according to a Law
Known but to thee, whom, drenching in thy Love,

Thou dost, to each, allot a height above
Earth's little level, that they may arise
From hells of flesh to the soul's paradise.

It is of her I sing who is no more,
Lakshmi, the Master's sacred Cow, who bore
The beauty of a goddess - she who was
Experience carven out of luminous pause
And moulded into creature line and curve;
Lakshmi, the Mother Cow, was born to serve
Sage Ramana.

Yet, it was nothing strange,
Some say her creature form was but a change
From human, since - such is the story told -
She was a woman once, wizened and old,
Her wrinkled body all in tatters clad,
But held behind that ugliness she had
A lamplike soul that bade her self engage
In long and selfless service of the sage.

She came to Him through many noons and eves
Bringing Him simple fare of herbs and leaves
Plucked with devotion, cooked with love and care,
And, it is said, He ate the humble fare
As though it were a banquet!

Serving thus
She died and passed into the luminous
Lakshmi that she might serve Him once again
And so, through service, finally attain
Self-knowledge and release .....

Great Master! thou
Art all-compassionate. Upon the brow
Of self-surrender thou dost seal thy grace
And dost, in a miraculous while, efface
Bondage and grief. In thy compassion's ken
Dumb creatures share an equal place with men.

Thy law is universal, working out
Even through layers and layers of lampless doubt
Ultimate faith which sees thee as thou art:
Master Illumination of the heart!

Even so did Lakshmi know thee, Master! when
She breathed and moved amidst a world of men
Who scarcely know thee. Even as a cloud
Moves in the wide horizon, glow-endowed
And solitarily she moved with grace
Within thy Love's horizonal embrace;

Within thy Mercy's garden, hour by hour,
She grew from bud to flower, and then from flower
Into the ripened fruit of wisdom hued
With subtle hues of inward solitude.
And while she was a bud she lit the air
With delicate sweetness making us aware
Of some high mission to be done through her;
Then, in the flowering state, she seemed to stir
The hermitage with more-than-human power,
And everywhere she went she was a flower
Scattering fragrance drawn from inwardness;
The Master met her soul, beyond our guess,
In high communion and absolute
Love that transformed the flower into the fruit
Of ultimate ripe attainment.

She has passed
Into His shining vast
Of Essence, beyond form and name;
She has become a Flame
Upon His quiet altar which shall burn
Forevermore, lending at every turn
Light to our hearts and splendour to our minds;
Dark Death, the wind of winds,
Can not disturb it on that altar burning:
She will no more in any form occur,

The law of evolution no more binds
her great untramelled spirit. Lo, for her
There is no more returning!

Yet, let us see what was the heritage
Which brought Her to the all-compassionate Sage?
What strange unearthly scope
Embodied in her horoscope
And in herself? this creature made of earth,
What gave the high significance to her birth?
What penance and what prayer
In other births than this, her last,
Did she perform, scaling stair upon stair
Of pure illumination in the past
Closing in ultimate ripeness?

Let us unveil
Before the world her fascinating tale:
In nineteen twenty six, ... four mortal years
After the passing of the Sage's Mother
Into the State of Light and Liberation,
Granted to Her by the great Seer of Seers,
A bhakta came to offer salutation
To Him, and brought with him a gift along,
A cow and a she-calf, lovely and strong
The rose-red season-ache in blood and limb,
With tenderness the creatures gazed on Him
And knew He was their Lord...

He only smiled
And gently said: "The Mother and her child
Need tending with devotion, love and care.
So, take them back, and know that I am there
Wherever they may be ..."

Arunachala Pillai

" Lord, they are thine,
Have mercy and accept them. Every line
Contour and curve of them are thine alone.

It is a gift I make thee, humbly bowed
In reverence. I pray, do not disown
The humble gift...."

Out of the crowd
Emerged a little man, who hardly spoke
At other times, a puny fragile man
Whose words collected to a master-stroke
And seemed thrice pregnant with some future plan
Of which he was unconscious.

Ramanatha Dikshitar

It is my prayer
The offering be accepted. In this place
They shall remain receiving love and care
Fed not on fodder merely, but Thy Grace!

Thenceforth, the mother-cow remained beside
Her lovely calf which like a crescent waxed
In beauty day by day, and seemed untied
Knot after knot of creaturehood; relaxed
Slowly but surely from her animal state
The calf appeared to sense the Lord and wait
Tip-toe on some great happening, all sublime:
Then, they were led after a little time,
To dwell within a dairy in the town
Among a hundred others of their ilk,
Conducted by a person of renown
Who earned his daily bread by selling milk.
His name was Pasupati Iyer ... he
Was Ramana's thrice humble devotee
Who visited the Sage from day to day
And with him brought these twain to bend and pay
Homage along with him.

The calf began
Within herself to calculate and plan
Her future carefully, - yet, no one guessed

The gathering inspirations in her breast!
Without show or fuss, she had decided
To learn by note the roadways that divided
The dairy from the hermitage. And soon,
Growing from the young crescent to the moon,
She grew in wisdom and self-confidence
And with her growth, within her grew the sense
Of adoration for the Lord who was
Already bending her to other laws
Than those of earth and time. Each nerve in her
Began to wake and ache and thrill and stir
With sweetness, until every nerve became
A roadway kindled with unearthly flame
Leading her footsteps to the hermitage
Where on her own she came at last to dwell!
One of the few, the chosen of the Sage
Held evermore under His magic spell.

Lakshmi they called her; and , indeed, she proved
Goddess of Wealth. The way she breathed and moved,
The manner of her gait, the light that beamed
In her large jewel-glorious eyeballs seemed
To bear an air of boons.

After her coming
The little hermitage began a-humming
With affluence and progress. Thus, at length,
It grew from joy to joy, from strength to strength,
Lands multiplied, grew plenty, laughed with grain
And structures loomed like links within the chain
Of Ramana's growing Kingdom.

Her tangled mesh
Of mortal life is over. She is not
Among us now, a form of blood and flesh,
But lives as lyric light that never dies;
The memory of her movements brimmed with grace
Haunts us forever, and her jewel-eyes

Glitter in every corner of this place
Shedding strange glory. Everywhere we turn
We feel her presence like to moonrise burn
Cleaving our darkness.

While they build and raise
A monument to her in humble praise
Of her existence and her saintliness,
She stands amidst the toiling men to bless
Their labour. Her divine arithmetic
Sums up the meaning of each stone and brick
Which go to build her pure mausoleum:
Her Presence is not heralded by drum
Or cymbal nor announced by sounding pipe,
But by Itself which sheds around a ripe
Self-blaze of realisation. She remains
As one ecstatic tingle in our veins
Linking us with the Master, golden-hearted,
Who but a little hour ere she departed,
Touched her into release, - calm stroke by stroke,
Thrice tenderly, compassionately, awoke
In her a wondrous seerhood!

She has gone
Beyond our common ken, beyond the dawn
And noon and evenfall-nay, she has earned
Creation's rich totality and turned
Part of creation's sweetness gripped above
Desire and hunger, thirst and ache and love
Which hold the world in bondage.

Seer of Seers!
Perfect us difficultly through the years
Into the state to which she has attained;
Make us, like her, surrender, every inch
Until we, too, have reached thy Feet and gained
Self-cancellation. May we never flinch
Even by a hair's-breadth from the Truth thou art:

Teach us, as thou didst her, in limb and heart
The full surrender until naught remains
Of blindness and corruption, rusted chains
Of thee-betrayal.

May we evermore
Learn from sweet Lakshmi to salute thy Light,
To bend in self-surrender and adore
Thy Presence reigning on the starry height
Piercing the darks of sightless human sight.
Give us the Grace, like her, to see
Beyond thy human form, thy Majesty
Enveloping the universe. Like her
Make each of us a true interpreter
Of spirit-radiance until we, who seek,
Grow one and indivisible with thy Peak.

(Archives of Sri Ramanasramam)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–o0o–

The fates of souls are all by God ordained
According to the deeds that they have done.
That end that's destined ne'er to be attained
Will never be achieved by anyone
However hard they try. All those things, too.
That it is destined must occur one day.
Will come to pass whatever you may do
To interfere and try their course to stay.
And this is certain. At length we come to see
That it is best that we should silent be.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

BHAGAVAN AND PEACOCKS

Prasad

It is about 10 a.m. Bhagavan was in his place in his usual reclining posture. There was quite a large gathering that day. Nobody spoke. The smoke from the agarbathis curled silently and gracefully upwards and away. There walked into Bhagavan's Presence, two peacocks - one white and the other multi coloured. Catching Bhagavan's silent wish, the attendant nearby put a handful of grain for each of the 'visitors'. The coloured peacock began to peck away at his 'prasad' while the white one, without touching his share, stood watching the other feeding himself with relish. Suddenly he (the white) flew at the other end and drove him away from the food. The one, thus driven, looked up at Bhagavan and one could quite easily feel the appeal and the silent query in the bird's attitude.

Bhagavan smiled and spoke thus to the mischief-maker, even as a loving mother would to her mischievous, little son "Come here, You have your share. Why do you trouble him?" Everyone was intently watching. The white peacock took a few dignified steps towards Bhagavan and gazed at Him with shining eyes. Bhagavan extending his hand, said softly: "Yes, Eat your share. Let him alone. Go. Go". Obediently, the white peacock retraced his steps to his share of food, while the other which had, all this time, stood at a distance, came back to his share of the grains. It seemed as if a highly tensed spring had been gently, yet firmly released. Nobody spoke. Silence had become more silent. Everyone, including the peacocks, understood.

(Call Divine Jan. 1, 1955)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

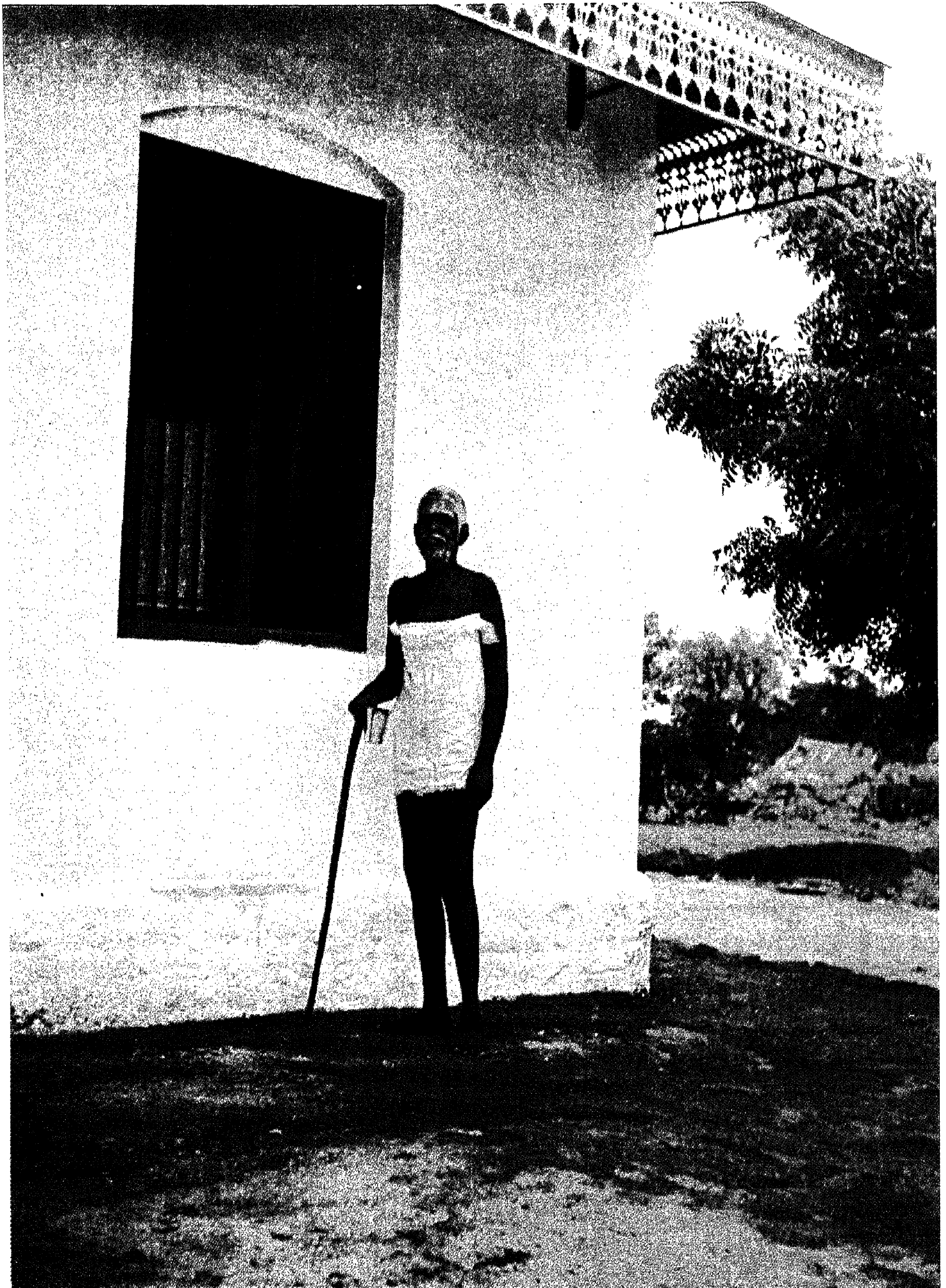
–o0o–

When I was stung by hornets in revenge
Upon the leg until it was inflamed,
Although it was by chance I stepped upon
Their nest, constructed in a leafy bush;
What kind of mind is his if he does not
At least repent for doing such a wrong?

Bhagavan Sri Ramana



With Pranams from: Inland Surface Service, Madras



With Pranams from: Economic Cargo Carriers, Madras

THE UNITY OF SURRENDER AND SELF-ENQUIRY

K. Swaminathan

One of Ramana Maharshi's most frequent comments was that there were only two reliable methods for attaining Self-Realization; one could either pursue Self-enquiry or one could surrender. An almost equally common statement was that *jnana* and *Bhakti* are ultimately the same. This second statement is usually interpreted to mean that whichever of the two paths one chooses to follow, the ultimate goal and the culminating experience will be the same. It is generally assumed that the two paths do not converge until the moment of Realisation is reached. However, if Ramana Maharshi's teachings are correctly interpreted, then it will be seen that the paths of surrender and Self-enquiry merge before Realisation, and that in the higher levels of practice, if one follows the path of surrender, then one's *sadhana* will be the same as that of someone who has chosen the path of Self-enquiry. This may seem very radical at first sight, but this is only because of the general misconceptions that many people have about Ramana's teachings on the true nature, meaning and practice of surrender. In order to eliminate these misconceptions, and to clarify Ramana's attitude and approach to surrender, it will be helpful to examine some of these commonly held ideas in the light of Ramana's statements on the subject, firstly to show how unfounded most of these ideas are, and secondly, by eliminating them, to illustrate the profundity of Ramana's real teachings.

The most convenient starting point for this enquiry is the relationship that exists between Ramana Maharshi, the Guru, and the thousands of people who call themselves his devotees. There is a long tradition in this country of people accepting certain teachers as their gurus, and then proclaiming immediately that they have surrendered to them. In most cases, this surrender is only a statement of intent, or at best, there is a partial surrendering to this new authority figure in the hope of acquiring some material or spiritual reward. Ramana's opposition to this type of religious bribery was quite clear, and it is best summed up in the following statement: "Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether he appears or vanishes; await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as you please, it is not surrender but command to Him.

You cannot have Him obey you and yet think that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything to Him; His is the burden, you no longer have any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. This is *Bhakti*". (Talks, p.425). This statement, typical of many that he made is a categorical refutation of the idea that one can surrender to one's God or Guru, and yet demand that the God or Guru fulfills one's desires or solves one's problems. Despite this often repeated refutation, it is probably true to say that the majority of Ramana's devotees both believe that they have surrendered to Ramana, yet at the same time, would not hesitate to approach him with their personal and material problems, especially if the perceived need required an urgent solution. In Ramana's teachings on surrender, there is no room for stray desires, and no room for expectations of miracles, no matter how desperate the situation might appear to be. Ramana says:

"If you have surrendered, you must be able to abide by the will of God and not make a grievance out of what may not please you." (Talks p.115)

Under Ramana's strict interpretation of absolute surrender, the only appeals which might qualify for approval are those where the devotee approaches the God or Guru with the attitude "This is your problem and not mine; please attend to it in any way you see fit." This attitude bears the marks of partial surrender, for it fulfills the bare minimum requirements of Ramana's definition of true surrender. On this level of surrender, there is no longer any expectation of a particular solution, there is simply a willingness to accept whatever happens. It is interesting to note in this connection that although Ramana clearly stated that devotees who wanted their problems solved were not practicing true surrender, he did admit that surrendering one's problems to God or to the Guru was a legitimate course of action for those who felt that they could not stick to His absolute teaching of complete surrender. He was once asked, "Is it proper that one prays to God when one is afflicted by worldly ills?" and his answer was "Undoubtedly." (Talks, p.501). This admission that the Guru may be approached with personal problems should be seen as an extension of, and not a contradiction of his teachings on absolute and unconditional surrender. For those who are not ready for complete surrender, there is this intermediate practice of surrendering one's problems to the external "Higher Power." It is not a dilution of his notion that surrender must be complete and total to be effective, it is more an admission

that for some devotees, such a massive step is impractical without some lesser intermediate stage.

If we can reach this point where we accept that we cannot ask Ramana to solve our problems and still claim that we have surrendered, then we move forward a few steps in our understanding of his teachings, but if we then try to put our new understanding into practice, we immediately encounter a new and apparently insoluble problem. The problem is that the desire to surrender is in itself a desire which we want fulfilled, and since, according to Ramana, true surrender cannot be accomplished without complete desirelessness, the presence of this desire in us is sufficient to prevent true surrender from taking place. It is the paradox of effort which is inherent in nearly all forms of *sadhana.* Simply stated, the problem is that there is a perception that there is an individual self which wants to extinguish itself so that the state of Realisation will be revealed, but anything which this individual self tries to do to eliminate itself merely prolongs its own existence. If one sees spiritual practice as something that one *does* to attain Realisation, then there is no solution to this problem; there is no solution because the whole problem stems from the totally false assumption that this individual self has a real existence. The first path along the path to true surrender is not to throw oneself at someone's feet and say "I surrender," it is the cultivation of the awareness and the understanding that there is no individual self to surrender, and that this individual self never at any time had, has, or will have any real existence. When Ramana said on several occasions: "Who is to surrender what and to whom?" (Talks, p.176), he was trying to drive home this fundamental point that without this understanding that there is no individual self, then all spiritual practices are done under false pretences, and that meditation, surrender or self-enquiry done without this constant awareness are merely exercises in self-deception. The best illustration of this point that I have come across appears in a recent publication called *The Secret of Arunachala.* In it, a devotee remarked to Ramana that a certain fellow devotee must be well advanced on the spiritual path because he meditated for eight to ten hours every day. (Page 73). "Oh," replied Ramana, "*he* meditates, *he* eats, *he* sleeps. But who is meditating, eating, sleeping? What advantage is there in meditating for ten hours a day if in the end that only has the result of establishing you a little more deeply in the conviction that it is you who are meditating?"

This aspect of Ramana's teachings, that one is already realised here and now, is widely ignored when it comes to practice, but its importance cannot be overstated. Ramana has said: "The removal of ignorance is the aim of practice and not acquisition of Realisation." (Talks p.322). The most fundamental piece of ignorance is that there exists an individual self who is going to do *sadhana*, and that by doing *sadhana*, this individual self will disappear or be merged in some super-being. Until this concept is eliminated on the mental level, it is not an exaggeration to say that one is wasting one's time in attempts to surrender or to enquire 'Who am I?' Correct attitude and correct understanding of this matter are of pre-eminent importance if the application of Ramana's teaching is to be successful.

Returning now to the practice of surrender, and bearing in mind the necessity of maintaining the right attitude with regard to the nonexistence of the individual self, there remains the problem of how to surrender since the mere desire to surrender invents an illusory person who is going to surrender. The key to this problem and the key to all problems connected with the practice of Ramana's teachings is to bypass the mind and move to the realm of being. One cannot truly surrender without escaping from that vast accumulation of ideas and desires we call the mind, and according to Ramana, one cannot escape or destroy the mind by any kind of mental activity. Ramana's solution is to let the mind subside to the point where it disappears, and what remains when the mind has subsided is the simple, pure being that was always there. In a conversation in *Talks*, Ramana gives the following illuminating answer. He says:

"It is enough that one surrenders oneself. Surrender is to give oneself up to the original cause of one's being ..... One's source is within oneself. Give yourself up to it. That means that you should seek the source and merge in it." (Talks, p.175).

This is an immensely profound statement which not only sweeps away many of the myths that surround the practice of surrender, it also shows an indication that the route to the rediscovery of the Self is the same whether one chooses to label it "surrender" or "self-enquiry". If we examine this statement closely, it is possible to extract three important conclusions regarding Ramana's attitude and approach to surrender. Firstly, there is no external deity or manifestation to whom one must surrender; secondly, the source of one's

being is within us; and thirdly, and most importantly, true surrender is to go back to the original cause of one's being and remain firmly and continually rooted there.

If this is translated into terms of practical advice, then surrender comes down to two words, being and stillness. In *Talks* Ramana says: "Your duty is to be, and not to be this or that, 'I am that I am' sums up the whole truth. The method is summed up in 'Be still'." (Talks, p.333). The stillness and the being which Ramana speaks co-exist with each other and reveal themselves in their full radiance whenever interest in one's thought stream dries up. Thus, for Ramana, the practice of surrender is to find within oneself this feeling of beingness and surrender oneself completely to it. On this level of surrender, practice consists of giving up wrong ideas by refusing to give them attention. Ramana's statement that "The removal of ignorance is the aim of practice and not acquisition of Realisation" (Talks, p.322) is extremely relevant in this connection, for it is only wrong ideas that separate us from a full awareness of our natural state. This final stage of surrender is simply a giving up of attachment to ignorance by bypassing the mental processes which cause and perpetuate it. The practice is the fruit of the conviction that there is nothing to surrender, for by denying attention to the mental processes, one is finally surrendering the erroneous idea that there is an individual self to surrender.

When one attempts to practice this conviction by putting attention on the feeling of being that is within us, thoughts and desires will initially continue to flow at their normal rate, but if attention is maintained over a period of time, the density of thoughts decreases, and in the space between them, there emerges the clarity, the stillness and the peace of pure being. Occasionally this stillness and this peace will expand and intensify until a point is reached where no effort is needed to sustain the awareness of being, the attention merges imperceptibly with the being itself, and the occasional stray thoughts no longer have the power to distract.

When this point of surrender has been reached, all the ignorant misperceptions which constitute the illusory ego have disappeared, but this is not the final state of Realisation, because the misconceptions are only in suspension, and sooner or later, they will emerge again. Ramana has stated that the final, definitive elimination of ingnorance is a matter for Self. He says that effort can only take one to a certain point, and then the Self takes over and

takes one to the goal. In the case of surrender, the initial effort is the shifting of one's attention from the world of thoughts to the feeling of being. When there is no attention on it, the mind subsides revealing the being from which it came, then in some mysterious way, the Self eliminates the residual ignorance and Realisation dawns. Ramana summed it all up very neatly when he said: "Just keep quiet and Bhagavan will do the rest." (*Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge,* p.147).

This shifting of attention is the ultimate act of surrender. It is an acknowledgement that the mind, it's concepts and desires are all ignorance, and that involvement in and attachment to the ignorance is all that prevents a full awareness of Reality. It is an acknowledgement that nothing that is understood or believed is of any use; that no belief, theory, idea or mental activity will bring one any nearer to Realisation. It is an acknowledgement and a final acceptance of the idea that all striving and all notions of attainment are futile and illusory. This simple shifting of attention constitutes the culmination of surrender, because it is the final surrendering of the ignorant notion that there is an individual self to surrender. It is the final acceptance in practice of the conviction that there is only attachment to wrong ideas and that this attachment can be severed by refusing to give these ideas any attention. This final level of surrendering ignorance represents the full flowering of Ramana's teachings on surrender, and any less absolute interpretation merely entangles one in the meshes of the ignorant ideas he was striving so hard to eliminate. It is admitted that as a concession to weakness, he occasionally permitted and approved lower levels of surrender such as devotion and worship, but for those who could comprehend and practice his more absolute teachings, he would be satisfied with nothing less than the total unconditioned surrender which is implied in the practice of being and the detachment from ignorance.

Bearing this in mind it will now be constructive to have a closer look at the practice of self-enquiry, and to focus attention on the large overlap that exists between enquiry and surrender. Ramana's advice on self-enquiry was clear, simple and direct, but like his advice on surrender, it has often been misunderstood and misrepresented.

The easiest way to avoid errors is to remember three simple but fundamental tenets of Ramana's teachings; firstly, that we are all Realised here and now, and that the only purpose of sadhana is to remove the idea that we are

not; secondly, there is no individual self to extinguish, because the individual self never at any time existed; and thirdly, no amount of mental sadhana is helpful because the mind cannot do anything except extend the frontiers of its own ignorance. If an awareness of these points is continually maintained, then the most obvious errors in practice can be avoided. One immediately sees that concentration on a point in the body is counter-productive because it involves mental effort. One can also eliminate the idea that self-enquiry is a mantra or an exercise in self-analysis because both of these approaches involve mental activity. On a more subtle level, if one maintains an awareness that the individual self at no time ever exists, then one can avoid the dangerous but often deeply-rooted notion that self-enquiry involves one self looking for another self.

To cut through the entanglements of these and similar misconceptions, and to find out what positive practical advice Ramana had to offer on self-enquiry, one cannot do better than go back to the words of Ramana himself. In *Maharshi's Gospel*, he says that "The purpose of self-enquiry is to focus the entire mind at its source" (p.48) . The purpose of this focussing is the same as that which has just been outlined for the practice of surrender. According to Ramana, the mind is only a collection of ignorant ideas, and unless one steps completely outside this mental realm by keeping attention on the being from which the mind emerges, then the ignorance and the wrong ideas will inevitably continue. It is important to note that Ramana never explains self-enquiry as a practice by which an individual self is eliminated, he always phrases his advice to indicate that when one looks for the source of the mind or the ego, then both disappear, and it is discovered that neither of them ever existed. This stepping outside the mind is as crucial to an understanding of self-enquiry as it is to an understanding of surrender.

In a passage in *Talks* he says:

"The fact is that the mind is only a bundle of thoughts. How can you extinguish it by the thought of doing so or by a desire. Your thoughts and desires are part and parcel of the mind. The mind is simply fattened by new thoughts rising up. Therefore it is foolish to attempt to kill the mind by means of the mind. The only way to do it is to find its source and hold on to it." (p.463).

This finding the source and holding on to it is the beginning, end and

purpose of self-enquiry. The precise method is simple and well known. When thoughts arise, one does not allow them to develop. One asks oneself the words, "To whom do these thoughts occur?" And the answer is "To me," and then the question occurs, "Then who am I? What is this thing in me which I keep calling 'I'?" By doing this practice one is shifting attention from the world of thoughts to the being from where the thought and the thinker first emerged. The transfer of attention is simply executed, because if one holds on to the feeling "I am" the initial *thought* of 'I' will gradually give way to a *feeling* of 'I', and then sooner or later, this feeling "I am" will merge into being itself, to a state where there is no longer either a thinker of the thought 'I', or a feeler of the feeling 'I am'; there will only be being itself. This is the stage where attention to the feeling of "I am" has merged with the being from which it came, so that there is no longer the dualistic distinction of a person giving attention to the feeling of "I am". There is only being and awareness of being.

If this practice is done persistently, then the verbal redirection of attention soon becomes redundant; as soon as there is the awareness of attachment to a particular thought, then attention is immediately switched back to the being from which the thoughts and the imaginary thinker came. It is important to stress that the verbal preliminaries of asking "Who am I?" or "To whom do these thoughts occur?" are simply tools to redirect the attention, the real self-enquiry begins with the subsequent witnessing of the disappearance of the thoughts, and the re-emergence of being as the mind subsides into temporary abeyance. Ramana summarized this very succinctly when he said in *Talks*: "*Abhyasa* (spiritual practice) consists of withdrawal into the self everytime you are disturbed by thought. It is not concentration or destruction of the mind, but withdrawal into the Self". (p.464). Since, in Ramana's terminology the terms being and Self are virtually synonymous, what he is describing here is the practice of withdrawing into being and remaining there, undisturbed by the transient distractions of thoughts. This practice may be viewed from two perspectives. In the higher levels of surrender, maintaining awareness of being can be seen as a surrendering of wrong ideas, including the wrong idea that there is someone to surrender, whereas in self-enquiry, one reaches this same point of being by actively discarding thoughts, and by tracing back the feeling of "I am" until it finally subsides into the being from which it came. Though the two descriptions might appear to be describing two completely different approaches, particularly in the preliminary stages, if

the practices of surrender and enquiry are persistently and earnestly pursued, then the two approaches finally merge imperceptibly into the single practice of being. To surrender false ideas is simply to be and that same state of being is the point where thoughts and the idea of a thinker disappear. This point, this state of being, is beautifully described in *talks* when Ramana says:

"It is the state of perfect awareness and perfect stillness combined. It is the interval between two successive thoughts, and the source from which the thoughts spring ..... Go to the root of the thoughts and you reach the stillness of sleep. But you reach it in the full vigour of search, that is with perfect awareness." (p.564).

This point which Ramana describes so graphically is the point of convergence between the path of self-enquiry and the path of surrender. The final, definitive detachment from ignorance has not yet happened, for this final elimination is a matter for the Self. Until that elimination takes place one can only be, and once the awareness of being is maintained effortlessly, then the being of surrender in which one has given up all ideas, is the same being which results from witnessing the disappearance of the "I thought". This state of being is still a stage of sadhana, for it lacks permanence, and the mind is liable to reassert its dominance at any time. However, it is the final stage, and as such it is the purest and deepest level of both surrender and self-enquiry. It is a state which belongs neither to the world of ignorance nor to the Absolute Reality, but somehow, mysteriously, according to Ramana, it provides the link between the two.

When Ramana said on one occasion, "Do not meditate, *Be*, do not think that you are, *Be*", (Secret of Arunachala, p.73), he was summarising the whole of his practical teachings, because for Ramana, it is only in this state of effortless awareness of being that the final Realisation will be revealed.

(The Mountain Path, Vol.18, No.1, 1981)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

LIGHT ON THE TRUTH

(Revelation)

With a Commentary

'WHO'

INTRODUCTION

Life in the world consists of two stages, or paths, namely that of *Pravrtti* or going forth into the labyrinth of selfishness, getting more and more entangled in worldliness thereby having to suffer chronic misery instead of the longed for happiness, and that of *Nivrtti* or returning to one's Home in God, the source of one's being, thereby becoming reintegrated to Him, which is the essence of what is loosely called Deliverance from bondage. In the former the souls are unaware of the truth, namely that the self is one with God, the Impersonal Being, whom the sacred lore describes succinctly as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*-Reality-Consciousness-Bliss-and hence is perfect, without wants. This idea of separateness is the root of all evil and of all sorrow, as it involves privation of the Happiness, which is the very nature of the self, because of the identity of the self with that Impersonal, all-comprehending Being called God. To fill up the void thus caused, the soul seeks pleasure from sense-objects in the world outside. These pleasures seem to him to be the substance of happiness, which is not true because happiness, being the very nature of the Real self, is uncaused and therefore does not need to be sought. Whosoever has access to this Happiness in any degree is in that degree free from the fascination of pleasure-giving objects. Indeed the Bhagavan tells us that even worldly pleasures are pleasures only because of the access to that Inner Source of Happiness, which is momentarily obtained when a desire is fulfilled.

Hence the pursuit of happiness in the world outside is a mistake, and a very serious one, which results in more and more privation of true happiness. This growing privation aggravates the craving for worldly pleasures. A further consequence is that these pleasures become less and less satisfying, so that the misery that is due to separation from one's Source, namely God, becomes chronic and unbearable.

It is at this stage that a few souls, by God's Grace become aware that

this quest of happiness in the outside world is a mistake. Guided by that same Grace they take to the path of *Nivrtti*, which ultimately leads to the attainment of the Natural State, the True State of the Self , commonly known as Deliverance from Ignorance and Bondage. This is the end of the separation from God, the root cause of all evils.

Naturally the aspirant when taking to this Path needs a Guide, a Guru. And the only proper Guru is the One that has Himself reached that state and abides in It all the time without intermission. Such a One is called a *Jivan Mukta* which means one who, even during life, is ever in the Natural State, called *Sahaja Samadhi.* Such a one was *Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.* This Holy Text , *Ulladu Narpadu* the original of which is in Tamil, is the most important of all the written teachings of the Bhagavan, our 'Sat-Guru'. Before composing this text the Bhagavan imparted the same teaching to a devotee-disciple named Sivaprakasam Pillai, which appears in print under the title *'Who Am I'*, which would serve as an introduction to the study of this Revelation. The Bhagavan has also composed, prior to this one, a short book of teachings in Tamil, called *Upadesa Undiyar*, which may also be studied by way of preparation for a study of this Revelation. A free translation of the latter is given in an Appendix to this Introduction.

The Master, while wholly approving of all the paths followed by the aspirants, tells us that these are not direct paths to the Goal. He gives the reason in one of the verses in the Supplement (*Anubandha*), namely that in these other paths the aspirant starts with an assumption that is not true, namely that the Real Self is just identical with the so-called soul, which is indistinguishable from the ego, and is hence subject to limitations, or defects, which need to be removed by suitable efforts whereas in fact the Real Self, being just the Basic Reality, Consciousness-Bliss, is free from all imperfections. In the Direct Path as taught by Him, no assumptions are made about the Self, and so no self- created obstacles exist, which have to be overcome. All that is needed is to become aware of the Self as He is, and for this the Direct Path is the Quest of the Self, the Source wherefrom the I-sense rises, by fixing, the mind on one of two questions, 'Who Am I', or 'Whence Am I'.

In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* this direct path is very briefly indicated by one very short sentence,
"He has to be sought by the resolve to become aware of Him". Even in that

place the technique is not explained. Nor is it even mentioned clearly in any of the commentaries or independent text books, *prakaranas*, which are extant. Hence we may say that Bhagavan's teaching on this point is unique.

There is another point on which Bhagavan's teaching is much clearer than any other source, namely in the distinction between the *Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, the Natural State, free from thoughts, and the Yogic Kevala Nirvikalpa Samadhi, in which also there are no thoughts. The former alone is the State of Deliverance, not the latter, because in the latter the mind is not dead, but remains latent, so that it could revive again as explained in verse 13 of the shorter Revelation, the *Upadesa Undiyar.*

The substance of the Bhagavan's Teaching, which is otherwise exactly the same as that of His predecessor, Bhagavatpada Sri Sankaracharya, is summarised below.

All the ills of the worldly life are the outcome of the primary Ignorance by which the body, composed of the five sheaths, is identified with the Self, so that all the defects and limitations of the former are transferred to the latter; this is improper, because the Self is pure Spirit, Consciousness, not only distinct from these sheaths, but also quite unconnected with them. That the Self is therefore Timeless and Spaceless, the Transcendental Reality, which is also the Substratum of the World-Appearance which is not real in its own right, but only because it has that Reality for its substratum, which alone is real in Its own right. The Self therefore is Ever-Free and perfect, and does not need to be freed or perfected. By following the Direct Path the mind, – the agent of Ignorance, – is dissolved in the Self and bondage and all the ills of life are transcended , and the Self is realised as Pure Consciousness-Bliss, without wants and without limitations.

Obstacles to the successful pursuit of the Quest consist in thoughts going out to the world in various ways. These thoughts are rooted in the long-cherished, deep-rooted belief, that the body and the world are real in their own right. To still the mind and engage it in the Quest it is necessary to prevent these thoughts from arising at all. And this can be done only by substituting for the above false belief, the opposite belief, that the world, as a whole and in all parts, in not real in its own right, and is therefore an obstacle to the Quest. Thus forms, distinctions time, space, fate, with its opposite,

free will and the individual soul are taken up one by one and shown to be unreal. Thereafter the technique of the Quest is explained in three verses 27 to 29. The remaining verses of the Revelation give some teaching concerning the Natural State, not with a view to giving a positive description of It, but to remove misconceptions about it that have prevailed among the various schools of Vedanta. The Supplement clarifies a number of points, which are mostly of practical value.

The very last original composition of Bhagavan, the *Ekatma Panchakam*, comes as the Crown of His Teachings, suitable for fully ripe disciples. Therein it is pointed out that both bondage and deliverance are equally unreal, that the Self, being the Reality, shining by His own Light of Consciousness, is Ever Free, so that even the Direct Path is ridiculous from the highest possible standpoint, that the Self is not in the body, because it is the latter that is fictitiously created in the Self and that what is needed is just to cease to cherish the Ignorance, ' I am the body'. This Teaching, it would seem, is intended to unfold the secret of the Teaching by Silence given by God Himself as Dakshinamurti to the four sages, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatsujata and Sanatkumara, the mind-born sons of the Creator, who wanted the perfect Peace of the Self.

APPENDIX TO THE INTRODUCTION

The Essence of the Teaching

(Translation of the Tamil Text, The Upadesa Undiyar)

N.B. This translation will serve also as a translation of the Sanskrit version of this Revelation, the Upadesa Sara, also composed by Bhagavan

1. It is by God's will that actions yield their fruit. Actions are not God, because they are insentient. (This is a proof that God exists).

2. The fruits of actions, when they are spent, assuming a seed-form, immerse the soul in an ocean of actions. They do not lead to Deliverance.

3. (But)actions done without desire, as service to God, purify the mind and thus show it the way to the Goal.

4. This is clear, namely that worship, japa, and meditation, which are

activities of the body, speech and mind, respectively, are excellent in the order named. (Actions of the body are of the least value. Those of speech are more profitable, while meditation, being mental, is of the highest value. Japa is continuous repetition of a Name or sentence).

5. Service to God, remembering that all the eight world categories are His forms, is the most excellent worship of God. (That is, whatever service is rendered to any creature is worship of God, if it be remembered that the whole world, enumerated in the eight forms , is His Cosmic form).

6. Superior to loud praise of God and to inaudible japa is the purely mental process of meditation.

7. Uninterrupted meditation, resembling the flow of water or of ghee, is superior to that which is discontinuous.

8. Superior to the meditation with sense of difference is that done with the conviction of non-difference, in the form of 'I am He'.

9. Abiding in the True State, which is beyond meditation, as the result of the steady and persistent practice of meditation, is the truth of supreme Devotion (Love of God). (During sadhana devotion and the pursuit of True Knowledge are different. But they lead to the same Goal, which is both supreme devotion and perfect Knowing).

10. Remaining still in one's own Source (the Reality which is God) is Itself perfect Action, Devotion, Mind-Control and Right Awareness. (This is expressed in greater detail in the 14th verse of the Supplement to the "Light on the Truth").

11. The mind is settled when the breath is stilled (by Pranayama), like a bird caught in a net. (So) this is a method of stilling the mind.

12. (For) mind, whose function is sensation, and life, whose function is action, are two branches growing from One Root (Consciousness).

13. Quiescence of the mind is of two kinds, namely latency and final dissolution. (This needs to be understood because) the mind that is latent would revive, but that which is once for all dissolved (into the Self) will not rise any more. (The importance of this distinction is that it is the complete dissolution of the mind which leads to the Natural State, not the latency)

14. If after stilling the mind by stilling the breath, the mind be fixed on

one point, then the mind would be dissolved (and the Mindless State would be reached).

15. The great Yogi, who has attained the True State by the dissolution of the mind, has no need to do any action, because he has recovered his own True Nature, as the Real Self (who is actionless).

16. Right Awareness of the Self is just the mind becoming aware of its own true Nature as Pure Consciousness, as the result of the mind being disentangled from (attachment to) outside objects.

17. If the truth of the mind be persistently investigated, (Keeping it away from all outside objects) in the end there will be no mind left. This is the Direct Path which is available to one and all.(The process is explained in the succeeding verses)

18. The mind is nothing but a series of thoughts. Of all the thoughts the root is the 'I' thought. Hence the 'I' – the ego – is the mind. (The next step is unfolded in the next verse)

19. When the Source, wherefrom the ego arises is sought, the ego perishes. This is the method of Inquiry (Vichara), leading to Right Awareness (of the Real Self).

20. When (thus) the ego perishes, another 'I' (not as an object of thought) will shine of Itself in the form of 'I,I' that 'I' is the all (the Fullness of the Truth). (This is amplified in verse 30 of the First Part of the Light on the Truth).

21. That is the true meaning of the term 'I', (not the ego), because we do not cease to be in deep (dreamless) sleep, wherein the ego is absent.

22. That real I is not the body, nor the sense organs, nor life, nor the mind, nor the Darkness (Ignorance), because all these are insentient and unreal.

23. Since consciousness by which the Truth is known is not other than that Reality, the Truth Itself is Consciousness. Therefore WE are Consciousness (This makes it clear that there is only one Entity which is both Truth (Reality) and Consciousness).

24. Because God and the soul are both of the same nature,as Reality,they are One and the Same. Difference is only apparent, due to the difference in the

vehicles (sheaths), and the degree of Awareness. (God is Consciousness with Maya (creative power) for His vehicle, while the soul has Avidya (Ignorance) for his vehicle, the characteristic feature of God is Infinite Awareness; the awareness of the soul is limited).

25. Becoming aware of one's Self apart from the vehicle (the five sheaths making up the body) is itself rightly Knowing God, because it is He that shines (in the Heart) as the Self.

26. Knowing one's Self is just being the Self, because the Self is not two-fold. This is the State of Identity with the Truth (the True State). (The Self being only One, and also being the eternal Subject, can never become an object of Knowledge. Hence the expression 'Knowing Oneself' is not to be taken in a literal sense.)

27. Right Awareness is that in which there is neither Knowledge nor Ignorance, because in the State called Right Awareness there is no object to be known. (That is, therein there is no Dvaita, (duality)).

28. When Awareness of the Real Self has been won, what remains is the Beginningless, Endless Truth which is Consciousness-Bliss. (Whereby it is made clear that the Self has the three aspects, as Truth, Consciousness, and Bliss. Hence attaining Awareness of the Self is the attainment of perfection and of Bliss).

29. What is described as acting as an Instrument of God's will is just the remaining in this State of supreme Bliss, where there is neither bondage nor Deliverance. (This verse has reference to a verse in the 'Siva-Jnana-Bodham', a Saivite Text, wherein it is said that the freed soul has no actions of his own, but is **तवधीन स्ववृत्तिक**, that is, acts as prompted by God's will. It is here affirmed that it is in the True state, the Natural State of the Self, that this happens, because the Sage, the knower of the Self, is mindless. He is called a Jivan-mukta. He has no actions, because his ego has been lost once and for ever. But others see him acting. These actions are to be understood by us as actions of God directly operating the vehicles, without the intervention of personal volition. In the Sanskrit-version the meaning conveyed by the word **दैविक**, which must be interpreted as meaning 'one whose actions are God's actions.' This explanation was given by Bhagavan.)

30. The Lord Ramana, who is the Real Self (of all creatures), says that abiding in the Egoless State is itself the best Tapas. (Tapas is effort towards purification of the mind as a condition for reaching the goal. Such Tapas is indispensable for those that have yet to attain the Natural State which is Egoless. For Him that has won that State, Tapas is unnecessary. But by merely abiding in that State He gets all the good results of Tapas. Hence Being the Self is here described as the Highest Tapas. This is not for His benefit, but for that of His devotees.)

NOTE

This crisp summary of the different grades of sadhana, suitable at different stages on the Path of *Nivrtti*, shows that fitness for taking to the Direct Path is to be acquired by evolution through a long series of lives, in which sadhana of the previous stages are gone through with zeal for the attainment of the goal, whether rightly or wrongly conceived. The first stage is selfless, disciplined Action, which has the germs of Devotion in it. The second stage is Devotion, culminating in meditation, which leads to Samadhi, either automatically, or through deliberate practice of the quest. The third stage is the Quest, which is the Direct Path. The Goal is the recovery of one's own true Nature, as the Real Self, transcending the world.

(Archives of Sri Ramanasramam)

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–o0o–

Holding on the vision of the Absolute, abandoning all objects of contemplation, abiding in your own Self, and liberated even while alive, play in the world, O Raghava !

Outwardly active but inwardly inactive, outwardly a doer but inwardly a nondoer, play in the world, O Raghava !

Conducting yourself nobly and strictly keeping to worldly conventions but inwardly free and completely detached, play in the world, O Raghava !

Selections from Yoga Vasishta by Bhagavan Sri Ramana

THE RAMANA YOGA SUTRAS

Krishna Bikshu

Sri Krishna Bhikshu [Voruganti Venkata Krishniah] is a well-known name among the early devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana. A lawyer by profession, a scholar by nature and a devotee-supreme, he is the author of a number of works on Bhagavan. As an inmate of Sri Ramanasramam for a number of years under the Presence of Bhagavan, he authored RAMANA LEELA in Telugu which has captured the life and teachings of the Master, in a very captivating style. In the present work which is a study of one of the central teachings of Bhagavan, the writer elucidates with sharpness and clarity, how Bhagavan's teachings are in tune with the best traditional Advaitic thought and texts. This article was first produced by Sri Ramana Satsangh, Nellore in their 1980 Birth Centenary Souvenir and is now being re-issued for a wider readership.

Introductory

1. The 'sutra' is a form of Aryan Scientific literature. It is a statement of the essential point of a doctrine, in the fewest possible number of words, enunciated in a clear, unambiguous and comprehensive way, touching all the aspects of the point in question. In studying a sutra therefore, not even a letter can be omitted.

In ancient times, disciples used to go to the Master and request him to teach them the vedanta. The disciple was required to possess an initial basic ethical training and it was also required that he should have turned away from all the affairs of the world. As it is said in the Brahmanical texts, he should have had the four requirements of mind, and the six ethical qualities (in Sanskrit they are called 'sadhana chatushtaya' and 'Samadhi Shatka Sampatti').

The Ramana-doctrine requires no such initial equipment. It is intended for all, man or woman, or whatever race or clime. Anybody following the Ramana- path will, in the course of his sadhana, get all this equipment automatically.

We have said, the sutra being so short, not a letter can be omitted in its

interpretation. Why? The guru, after he elucidated the philosophical point, would put his entire teaching in the form of a sutra, so that the disciple could remember it easily, and by the law of association, the entire doctrine.

2. 'Yoga' literally means union; that is, of the sadhaka and the thing he strives for. The exact English equivalent is 'religion'. In common parlance, yoga signifies the doctrine of 'Hatha Yoga', or control of the breath by using force of several kinds, adopting various asanas, etc. But here, the word is used in a general sense, as a method of sadhana only.

In ancient times, the various ways of enlightenment were termed 'vidyas'. In the Vedas, only the term 'vidya' is used. From the time of the Gita, the term yoga has come into vogue; Vidya emphasizes the aspect of knowing the Ultimate. The word yoga signifies the union of the soul with the Divine. In the Ramana-doctrine, the real emphasis is on Knowledge and inherence in It, but the commonly known term yoga has been employed throughout in this brochure. So that Ramanayoga means the doctrine of Ramana, on the way to attaining the Ultimate.

3. Is it really for all? In a way, yes. It is more specially for those who are wallowing in the miseries of samsara, for those who wish to get away from that bondage, or even for those who have had enough of the world, even of the riches and the sweet fruits of samsara (the term used in Sanskrit for this point of view is Alam-buddhi, or 'enough idea'). The Ramana-doctrine is also for those who want to know the truth

The Text

I. 'Atma nishttho bhava.' Inhere in the Self.

Notes:

1. 'Atman' denotes the body, the prana, the mind, the buddhi, the individual and the Ultimate. Here, 'Atman' is only used to indicate the Ultimate. Normally the Self is the word used to indicate the Ultimate and the self used to indicate the individual entity. Already we are firm in the notion of our individuality and it requires no teaching from the Master. The Master emphasizes that the aim should be inherence in the Ultimate.

2. By implication, the Master insists that the sadhaka should turn his face

away from all the affairs and ideas of the world. He must be literally dead to it, so that he may be reborn in the Divine realm. The Master teaches that we should strictly abandon all activities, contacts and social functions of the world, whether good or bad, whether for individual or social benefit. The aspirant should be a 'nissanga'(non-attached). He should not allow himself to be carried away by such propaganda suggesting that 'living in society means participation in it for the good of society', or for that matter, for any portion of society or even for individuals. He should be non- attached even to his individual matters, including attainment of mystic powers or better worlds called 'heaven' in the Christian and Mohammedan religions, 'svarga' in the Hindu and Buddhist religions and the several lokas of Indra, Agni, Varuna etc; (Indra, Agni and Varuna are the devas or deities mentioned in the Veda; they have their own worlds or 'lokas'). In the Ramana-doctrine, there is no God or Gods, angels or archangels, powers and hosts to rely upon for attaining this state of Self-inherence.

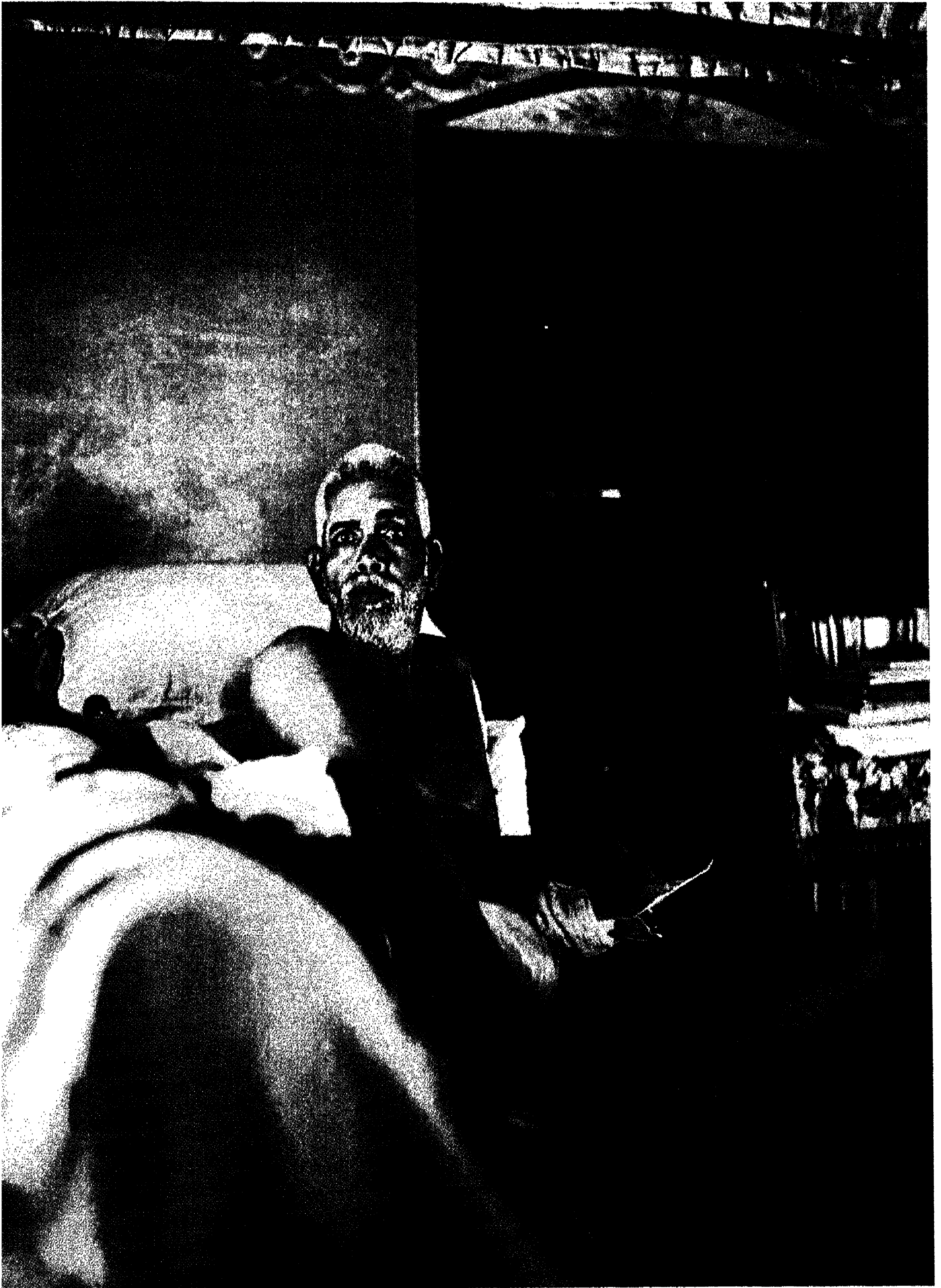
3. 'Nishtha' comprises two ideas really. 'Shttha' indicates 'be-ing in'; 'nish' indicates 'firmly, never to come out'. The use of 'nish' indicates that in the Ramana-doctrine, once one attains the highest state, there should be no coming back, or down. In the yoga-sastra the sadhaka comes down to earth again even from the states of highest Samadhi. When the power of his concentration slackens, he reverts to his normal state of consciousness, that is, 'jagrat'. Ramana distinguishes this state as the state of practice and not a state of attainment of the goal, which he calls the 'sahaja state', that is, the native state, the original state. According to him, it is only when he forgets his pristine state, that the notions of himself, the world and the Lord of the world occur.

4. This aphorism defines the goal; it must be noted that in Ramana's opinion all other activities, even the divinization of the world, are futile without which knowledge one can never understand his relation to the world and to the Lord, nor the lesser aim of perfecting the world, which will not and cannot be successfully done.

II. 'Hridi visa.' Enter the Heart.

Notes:

1. The word 'heart' here is used in its Verbal sense. It means 'that which carries away', 'that which engulfs'. 'that which digests everything into itself'.



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'he meaning is that the world, and consequently ideas of it, submerge into ıe heart. Logically, the ideas of the world must submerge into that from 'hich they originally sprang. In effect, the base on which thoughts arise and ıto which they finally subside is the heart. Really it is indefinable. For, a efinition means a significant distinctive statement of the characteristics of a ıing. All these are included in the realm of ideas which do not appear there, 'here the heart alone is.

. Therefore, the heart mentioned here should exclude the following definiions of the heart given in various schools of philosophy:

a) it does not mean the blood-pumping organ in the body:

b) it does not mean the 'anahata chakra' mentioned in the Yoga; In the 'oga-sastra it is said that there is a conduit pipe for the flow of the vital rana inside the spinal column consisting of two canals and sheathed into ne. Through one of them, the 'purva sushumna,' the Kundalini power flows 'om below upwards, when forced by the practice of Yoga, to the centres; and 'hen the power inheres in each chakra, various mystic powers are attained. 'he fourth chakra from below is called the 'anahata' and is about the level f the sternum. Evidently this is not the heart mentioned or intended here:

c) neither is it the Atman. Bhagavan explained the hridayam as consistıg of two words: 'hrid' plus 'ayam'. This is the 'hrid' that is the Atman. It ; said above in the first aphorism that to reach the Atman one must enter ıe heart:

d) nor is it the heart mentioned by Bhagavan as being on the right side of ıe chest between the two nipples. That is the point according to Bhagavan 'here first the 'Chit-sakti' (knowledge-power) enters the body of a being, ıat power goes to the head (sahasrara, through the Amrita nadi, and comes own through the sushumna giving us the experiences of the various worlds):

e) it is not the heart which signifies the center of emotions.

All these definitions must be eschewed before the exact significance of he word 'hrid' is comprehended. Hrid really means a state of consciousness nd force. It is from this sea of consciousness that during the wakeful state houghts arise, and into this that they again subside.

. Some say that thoughtlessness itself is the state of Atma-realization. Surely

not. We have no thought when we enter sleep or when experiencing a fit. Surely those states are not the state of the Atman. Buddha calls this state only 'sunyata' or void. But Atman is a positive conception.

Hindu philosophy explains that the Divine has an indefinable power called Maya. Maya should not be equated with illusion. These two are not the same. Maya has two powers; it acts as a sheath to the Atman. This power is called 'Avarana sakti'. There is another co-related power; this is the power of manifestation, of becoming many. That power is called the 'vikshepa sakti'. Now in sleep we are not in command of our own mind, that is, of the totality of thoughts. Our will does not function. We are said to be in a state of tamas.

4. To attain Realization we must have awareness! we must be wakeful and get the experience. We must have the sattva-guna.

The state of the void is called 'tamasi' by the Advaitins, or the maya. Buddhists call it the sunyata. Modern Indian Philosophers have made a total confusion between the two. They mistakenly proclaim that sunyata is the Brahman. No. One may or may not get the sunyata state before Realization. "Tripura Rahasya" says that there are six different states before attaining realization.

5. In yoga also, in the nirvikalpa samadhi, one gets a state of thoughtlessness; practically the glory of Atma-realization is experienced then. The only difference between that state and the state of Atma-realization advocated by Bhagavan is that in the former one slips back to the normal consciousness eventually. But when once Realization, or Atma-nishttha; is attained, one never departs from it.

III. 'Pavana chalana rodhat' By controlling the movement of the breath

Notes:

1. Bhagavan explains how one can enter the heart or the state of thoughtlessness. He says it can be done by controlling the movements of the breath. It is said that the word 'pavana' here is used in a technical sense. It means 'prana' or the vital force. The vital force in a body works mainly in five ways and in another five ways which are subsidiary. The first five movements

are called the pancha-pranas. The first force makes one breathe in: Another enables him to talk. Another enables one to expel things out of the body. Still another aids digestion, and the fifth spreads all over the body, keeping it alive. The pavana or the vital force here intended is that which makes one breathe in and out. It is called the 'Mukhya-prana'.

2. When the breath is held, it is observed that the thoughts also decrease and finally when the breath-movement is brought to a stand-still the thoughts also completely subside. This is a practical tip given by Bhagavan. He explains the rationale in a couplet in "Upadesa Saram" where he says, "Force divides into two branches. One is the mind and the second the prana." They are like a couple of horses yoked to a carriage. When the reins of one are held tight, it naturally has to stop, there by rendering the other unable to proceed.

Contrary to what medical science says, stoppage of breath does not result in an increase of carbon dioxide in the blood which should weaken a person. Yogis have been said to prolong their lives for hundreds of years by completely stopping their breath (by adopting what is called 'lambikayoga'). Now, completely stopping the breath is not possible in the beginning; it is a matter of practice. Certain other things are helpful (such as remaining fixedly in an asana) for effecting control of breath.

By controlling any one prana it is seen, in practical life, that you control the other pranas also.

3. When the movements of the vital force are controlled, this vital force no longer gives any scope for the sense-organs to reach out towards worldly objects. Consequently the vital force fills the body and returns to its source, the Atman, where the mind also dissolves at the same time. It is, so to speak, as if a dam were raised across a running torrent; which would perforce be obliged to reverse the direction of its flow.

4. It is said if one stops talking for a dozen years the mind will be rendered fairly calm, when the silencing of the thoughts altogether can be practiced. With a dozen years of practice of the latter variety, the silence attained will be profound and deep; and that is the state of Samadhi. Sri Rama Yogi, a well-known disciple of Sri Bhagavan, had practised the silence of the first variety, and the progress he made is well described in Paul Brunton's book, "A Search in Secret India."

IV 'Satata Pratyavekshanat' By constant watch (of the breath)

Notes:

1. There are several methods advocated as to the manner of breath control. The method the Maharshi teaches is a rare one; if it is merely watched, and no attempt at control is made, the breath, of itself, slows down almost to a vanishing point. This is a practical tip, and is the essence of several types of yoga sadhana.

2. Normally in 'Hatha Yoga' the nostrils are closed and opened with the fingers for definite intervals. Some say that if the time taken for in- breathing is one unit, the retention of the breath should be for four units and breathing out for two units. The sadhaka practising in this way is fighting a battle, as it were, with the force of the breath; were this battle to be conducted on wrong lines, dangers or disaster might follow, particularly were it to be lost. Forced effort may end in various kinds of diseases; it may entail madness, and in some cases, if the kundalini or life-force rises uncontrolled, the body gets almost burnt up, and death results;this practice is to be done under the personal surveillance of the Master, with great care and circumspection, adopting easy techniques from time to time, and under different restrictions as to diet, time and posture. The Maharshi bids us strictly to avoid this method of Hatha Yoga.

Do not fight with the natural flow of the breath; only watch it, as if you were a witness to a process. It is called the 'sakshi bhava' in philosophical terminology.

3. The advantages of the Maharshi's method are many. It automatically turns the thoughts away from the ideas and objects of the world, effecting a severance between the world and one's self. The world of affairs will amount to zero for the practicant of this method. All the tribulations that naturally follow any contact with the world cease; one becomes an untouchable for them, so that all disturbing factors are brought to an abrupt end. Not for him are the emotional surges and fits of despair found in the bhakti marga. Nor are the anxieties of the karma marga present. The dangers of the yoga marga will never touch him; not even the troubles of the path of raja yoga will face him; one is almost the Divine (the kootashtha, who is said to be the witness of the three states of consciousness jagrat, swapna and sushupti).

4. The result will be slowing down of the speed with which thoughts arise; they become slower, and at the end, a thought arises and sinks, an interval ensues, and only then another thought arises. That means, since the thoughts arise in consciousness (the ulterior self), the thoughts sink again into the consciousness, and before another thought ensues, there is only the consciousness, and no thought; in reality one is the consciousness, and then there is no idea of the manifested world, either gross or subtle. One is almost in the state of Divinity. It is the 'hrid' state of consciousness which is thoughtless. One has reached the highest possible goal of individual effort, where the little self is not known; it is almost attainment of the Atman.

5. The practice of this method needs no niyamas; differences in time, circumstances, clime, personality, sex, race and religion are all gone. The moment you begin this practice you are away and over the world's dualities. There, no more sastras, no more discussions trouble you. Others need not know that you are a sadhaka of this sort. Generally people praise a sadhaka for his consistency, good nature and high spiritual attainment. This praise is the greatest danger to a sadhaka. In "Ulladhu Narpadu" (supplement) Bhagavan has clearly pointed out this danger. In this method, even the vanity of being a sadhaka is given up.

6. We said, "almost the Divine"; the reason for this reservation is, that the Self, even in this state, is shrouded over by the 'avarana sakti' of Maya. None can remove this shroud by his own effort. For when one is in this state of 'hrid', there is no individual left to make any effort for the removal of this shroud. Then what is the way? Nothing but the Divine Grace can help you now. The state of 'hrid' contains in itself the unmanifested seeds of later manifestations. The force of those seeds must get weakened by efflux of time and experiences of their results in the various worlds, both subtle and gross. When the force of those seeds becomes negligible, the Atman of itself emerges in all Its glory. The state of 'hrid' is a negative experience. The state of the Atman is a positive experience, entirely dependent upon Its own Grace. So says the Upanishads: "To him whom It chooses It reveals Itself" .....Kathopanishad.

V. 'Manasa svam Chinvata' Searching for one's Self with the mind

Notes:

1. The self here is one's self; not the Atman. 'It' is beyond search. One's

self is a little entity; the search is to know whence the idea of 'I' arises; that is to say, who is this little self? In "Ulladu Narpadu" Bhagavan says, "The real Self does not say 'I'; the body cannot say 'I'; in between the two arises this thought 'I', and firmly clings to the body; if you search for its nature which is as a phantom devil, it disappears." When thoughts disappear into their source, even this thought 'I' should disappear. This 'I' thought is the primary thought, and the other thoughts cannot sprout without it.

2. This enquiry is sometimes based on the previous practice of watching the breath. Normally, we are not able to catch up with the speed with which one thought succeeds another. It is as if the several photographs on the cinema- reel succeed each other with such rapidity that we get the impression of one continuous picture. Therefore, it is only when we can slow down this mental process, and are able to catch each single thought by itself, that we can enquire about it. In slowing down thoughts, we have used the process of noting the breath. (We can also take the illustration of a slow motion picture here, say. of horse-racing).

3. When a thought by itself appears Bhagavan asks us to enquire to whom it arises, obviously with one's searching mind. It is an intellectual affair, not, as some others hold, a negation of thought. We hold to the thought and try to follow it up by asking to whom it occurs. Obviously it occurs to the notional 'I', for the real 'I' has no thought. Bhagavan asks us to proceed and see whence that notion arises. It must necessarily be to the consciousness ; that is to say, to the Atman, where even the 'I' thought does not exist. If one repeats this process continuously, without any break, the process must lead to the Atman. It is as if a brand burns other brands and itself too.

4. There is another slight modification. Instead of questioning to whom does the thought occur, enquire whence the thought arises. We mean any thought, not the thought of 'I' only; all thoughts must arise from the consciousness and they are directed towards the world and all our ideas connected with it. If we try to cut across the connection with this world, only the consciousness remains; it is the Atman. In this process there is only one step; whence does this thought arise? In the previous paragraph we have talked of a process, where there are two steps; searching for the source of each thought, and searching for the source of the 'I' - thought.

5. These processes are called by Bhagavan the 'sarala-marga', or the straight and easy path. At any rate, they are easy for those who can turn their minds inwards and away from the objects of the world. But if one, as a previous step, follows the first path of watching the breath, it is quite easy for anybody.

6. The point to note is, we do not negate a thought as does the Sankara-method. Sankara says, "When a thought occurs, dismiss it immediately. Here we do not do so; we retain the thought, and attempt to seek its source. I once asked Bhagavan how it should be possible to trace the root of a tree all the while without remembering the trunk of the tree; how can we go to the source of the thought without holding on to the thought?" Bhagavan replied, "Practice and see."

Bhagavan compares this method to each enemy soldier coming out of the fort alone, when he can be easily killed. If one thought comes out, one can easily kill it. If all the warriors in the fort rally forth at once, it will be difficult to repulse them. Therefore slow down the speed of the thoughts first; catch each thought, and by seeking its source, destroy it.

In the supplement to "Ulladu Narpadu" there is a verse which lends support to the idea that this Self-enquiry is performed without the mind. The matter will be elucidated in the explanation of the next aphorism. In this aphorism it is clearly stated that it is the mind which carries on this Self-enquiry.

VI. 'Majjatha va.' By dipping in.

Notes:

1. In the previous aphorism, Bhagavan advocated the discipline of going away from name and form, which, if they exist, form an obstacle in the path. In this aphorism, the discipline taught is a unique one in that it takes the very form and name used to denote the ulterior Divinity as steps to Realization of the ultimate Divine, the Atman. For, as it is said in "Ulladu Narpadu," "By whatever name or form you worship, or in whatever way you worship; the worship will lead you to That which has no name or form."

2. A name is but an idea; it reminds you of a quality, that is,'guna' or of an action 'kriya', of a genesis, 'jati' or of a symbol having a particular significance. At least that is so in Sanskrit. If we say, 'Siva' it means 'good

to the universe'; in that world an attribute is explained. If we say 'Vishnu', that means 'One who is omnipresent'. Being everywhere is an action. If we say 'the Formless', we indicate the genesis of a form. And if in mantra-sastra we say 'A', we use the symbol for the Creator. Therefore, the use of all the different languages means the use of different ideas. The basis of all languages is sound, and the different manifestations of sound are the letters, the basis of all creation. In the beginning there was the Word; the word could not have existed without an idea; the Word should have been comprised of different deflections of sound; and it was the Word out of which the world arose.

3. The worship of the Divine through words or ideas generally means with the help of hymns and songs, or stuti and mantras, a combination of words of mystical import, or namas, the names of the Lord.

In this aphorism, Bhagavan advocates sticking to the name, or the mantra. He says in "Upadesa Saram", "Japa of mantras is better than hymnal praise; and the mental repetition of the mantra or the name is more effective than the utterance of either, aloud or in whisper." And then he explains, "If you continue sticking to the sound or the idea, there will come a stage when there will be only a sound, undifferentiated even into various letters." As you go deeper and deeper, even the sound dissolves, and that process he calls 'dipping in'.

4. There is a midway between this 'dipping in' and the previous path advocated, that of Self-enquiry. When you repeat a name, or mantra, Bhagavan says, that you watch the source of the sound or Him that produces the sound, that being the Atman alone. You have followed the sound to the Atman. This is a finer way of Atma-vichara. That is what he taught to Ganapati Muni. Here is the reconciliation between mantrasastra and Vedanta.

5. As with the name, the process of 'dipping in' can be carried on with the help of a form. The most popular form taken up is that of an idol, an icon, a symbol like a swastika, a yantra like the six-pointed star, or a chakra, in the form of Sri Chakra. Hold on to any of these forms: Remember them every minute of your life. The forms disappear. There will be a light, - not of this earth, - it will be The Light, and the Light will disappear into the sunya, or the void, or 'hrid'. In technical language, the name is mentioned as nada,

and the final form of the form as the kala. Both disappear into the bindu, the vast void, wherein take place these phenomena or creation. In this method, we see clearly that thoughts are clung to as such, forms are clung to as such. There is no effort to reach their source. The source is reached automatically. Negate all thoughts of name and form except that which you have adopted. With this as your aid, dip in, dip into your self. Reject every other idea. As the source of creation, you are, you being the Atman.

6. In this process of 'dipping in' are included every sadhana advocated in any religion. Clinging to a name or form is bhakti. Worshipping a form or name is karma. Knowing a form or name and its significance is jnana. Keeping your attention fixed on a name or form to the exclusion of all others is raja yoga. All the religions of the world have their basis in this; clinging to the One and 'dipping in'. All meet in the Ramana-doctrine. This is the method he has advocated as mentioned under the previous aphorism, as the real vichara. In "Ulladu Narpadu", he says , "Do not utter 'I-I' aloud; collect all your prana; dip into That." That is real Atma-vichara.

7. It may be interesting to note that the idea that through sound, being the most subtle medium through which we can dip into the Atman, is also the opinion held by our great musician Thyagaraja. He says that without a knowledge of music, the art of utilizing sound, and without a knowledge of the sound in the Muladhara (sound as a concept), one can never attain Liberation. He followed Bakthi-marga and his practice was also 'dipping in', into the music, and merging with the primal sound. He also used the technique of yoga, by the control of the movement of prana through the various channels and through the sahasrara.

VII.' Sakshat bhati.' Directly experienced

Notes:

1. In aphorism five, nirgunopasana, or the worship of the Brahman without attribute; is advocated. In aphorism six the way of saguna Brahma upasana is explained. Under this aphorism, Bhagavan tells us that the fruition of the spiritual endeavours lies in the Atman flashing directly as our experience.

2. There are experiences of two kinds; one is mediate and the other is immediate. We see through the eye and know a thing, therefore it is mediate experience. Suddenly a thought flashes intuitively in the mind. That is imme-

diate experience. The experience of the Brahman can only be immediate, and unlike the usual experiences which imply a triad of experiencer, experienced and experience, this experience of the Atman is a direct immediate one. Bhagavan used to add: "Think of a person going down a well in search of some lost article. He sees it and takes it, but is unable to communicate this to the people outside the well itself; similarly, a man having the experience of the Atman (in samadhi) is unable to speak of It when he is in Samadhi. Unlike the first case, in the second even after he returns to the normal consciousness he cannot actually or exactly reveal it in words. For, words come after the appearance of phenomena. And in the Brahman there is no phenomenon."

VIII. 'Aham Aham Iti'. As 'I-I'

Notes:

1. The direct experience that comes to a sadhaka as a function of his endeavours is the experience of the Ultimate as 'I-I'. Various descriptions have been given of this experience, in the negative way, e.g.: It is neither light nor darkness; It gives light so It is called The Light. It is neither knowledge nor ignorance: It gives knowledge, so it is Knowledge (chit). In modern language too, It is not a being nor becoming, but It exists; therefore It is called Sat, in contrast to all other things that disappear. Bhagavan calls this experience the 'I' - experience. In that state one must have been there to experience It; It must be devoid of any other experience; then only can It be said to be the Self and nothing else.

2. Some have said, "There being only one experience, why would Bhagavan have used two 'I' s; 'I-I'?" One explanation is, the second 'I' does not indicate a subsequent experience; the second 'I' is used to confirm the experience. Others say, "In nirvikalpa Samadhi, you get a similar experience, but it is not a constant thing; like the flash of lightning, it appears and disappears; so, two 'I' s' are used. Finally, the experience becomes a constant one."

3. We may add that in yoga, in the experience there is a slight tinge of the individuality, and the mind can be said to have existed in a very very rarified state, called 'visuddha sattva'. But in actual experience it makes no difference. The experience is something like a throb; that is why it may be called 'jnana spanda'; 'a throb of knowledge'.

IX. 'Brahma matram'. Only brahman

Notes:

People dealing in sastras will question whether, the universe being real, and this experience being of a short duration, the Atman experienced can be real. They also say that in the texts the Atman is said to be Infinitesimally thin (thanvi). But Bhagavan says It is big, too. How to reconcile? The texts themselves give the answer; which Bhagavan has also repeated; "Smaller than the smallest and Bigger than the biggest", says the Upanishad.

The sruti says, "Verily, all this is Brahman". Then there can be no difference between the Atman and the Brahman. In the Atman there is a superimposition of the manifested cosmos, which alone is apparent to you, and which prevents your seeing the Atman. In the state of knowledge, the superimposed mental knowledge disappears, and, call It whatever you will, Atman or Brahman, that alone remains, without a second. As the sruti says: 'Ekameva' (only one); 'Adviteeyam' (no second).

X. 'Kevalam'. Only

Notes:

Philosophy expounds three types of differences: 'sajateeya' the difference between a horse and a horse. 'Vijateeya' like the difference between a horse and a cow. 'Svagata': the difference between the hand and the foot in one's person. Bhagavan says that none of these types of difference exists in Brahman. It is like an ocean; all salt water. Not even like an ocean; because, salt exists there in a state of dissolution. There is nothing dissolved in the Atman - It is pure.

This aphorism is necessary to controvert the position that the Brahman is saguna. Otherwise, how could a cosmos with various attributes come out of It? Bhagavan says, "No. It has no attributes; It is pure, undefiled by any admixture." It is, in Sanskrit, 'ghana' 'not giving scope to any other thing'. Now, the ultimate is ananda-ghana; not anandamaya.

Epilogue

These aphorisms are the very words of Sri Bhagavan. All but one of them have been taken from the first Sanskrit verse He ever wrote in about

1913, the famous Hridaya Kuhara Sloka forming chapter II of Ramana Gita. Aphorism number four has been taken from Ramana Gita itself (canto VI, ver.5). The explanations, several of them, were given by Bhagavan himself. The rest has been culled out from other philosophical texts, so that the author of this brochure makes no claim for originality. Nor does he claim that Bhagavan's teaching, except in one point, is original. So far as he is aware, Bhagavan's teaching and explanations are in tune with the best traditional Advaitic thought and texts.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

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The existence of all that is either affirmed or denied in the one substratum of the indestructible, unattached, non-dual, absolute Self depends only on the mind, just as the appearance or disappearance of the imaginary snake in a piece of rope has no basis in reality. Bondage and Liberation are creations of Maya, superimpositions upon the Brahman imagined by the mind without any existence in reality. It is a fool who blames the sun for his own blindness. It is impossible to argue that bondage is caused by the veiling power of Maya and Liberation by its destruction, since there is no differentiation in the Self. Such an argument would lead to a denial of the truth of Non-Duality and an affirmation of duality. This would be contrary to the authority of the scriptures. How can there be any display of Maya in Non-dual Brahman, which is perfect stillness, One Whole like the ether, spotless, actionless, unstained, and formless? The scriptures even proclaim aloud: "There is in truth no creation and no destruction; no one is bound, no one is seeking Liberation, no one is on the way to Deliverance. There are none Liberated. This is the absolute Truth". This is the sum and substance of all the Upanishads, the secret of secrets.

(Vivekachudamani) Bhagavan Sri Ramana



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THE ESSENCE OF RIBHU GITA

H. Ramamurthy

(condensed from the Sanskrit epic Sivarahasyam - Pt. VI)

[*The Ribhu Gita is one of the important texts commended by Bhagavan Sri Ramana for Sravana, Manana and Nidhidhyasana by earnest seekers. The Ribhu Gita is to Siva Rahasyam what the Bhagavad Gita is to Mahabharata. We have heard it said, by old devotees like Ramaswami Pillai that the recitation of the Ribhu Gita by Ashram-inmates in Tamil, as translated by Bhikshu Sastri (Ulaganatha Swamigal) and its elucidation by Bhagavan, was an unforgettable experience during the early twenties of this century.*

Also, as stated by B. V. Narasimha Swamy in SELF REALISATION, Bhagavan and His disciples used to sit up, especially after the night meal, reading books like Ribhu Gita and Kaivalya Navaneetam, each by turn reading a verse or a set of verses. The reading used to continue for two hours or more at a stretch, and occasionally the whole night. Bhagavan has said, "These readings from Ribhu Gita are as good as Samadhi". Evidently such a continuous reading induces Samadhi. In fact, page after page, nay line after line of Ribhu Gita merely goes on rubbing into one, the nature of the Self. With a constant study of such works the mind would easily get into the mood of Samadhi.]

Siva expounded the knowledge of Brahman-the Self (Atma) that is Brahman- to Parvati, once on Mount Kailasa.

Shanmukha, (of six faces), the second son of Parvati, the younger brother of Vigneswara, (the Lord over impediments) learnt this from her.

(Obeisance to them all!)

Sage Ribhu, a mind-born son of Brahma, the Creator (like Sanaka, Narada and others), once had this instruction from Siva himself, called Siva Knowledge (Siva jnana)

(Obeisance to the Sage!)

In the course of his wanderings on earth, Ribhu, happening to reach the Himalayan slopes, and worshipping the Lord of Kedara at Mount Kedara,

was sought after by the sages there, to enlighten them about the knowledge of the Vedas and the great aphorisms, received by him direct from Lord Siva, to enable them to attain liberation from samsara, the repetitious birth-death cycle.

The discourse by Ribhu in response, is an episode in the Sanskrit epic Sivarahasyam.

(This self-contained exposition of monism by Ribhu has later been referred to as **Ribhu Gita** in a Tamil translation published about a hundred years ago.)

The Ribhu Gita primarily relates to the concept of Brahman and the Self that is Brahman.

It reiterates in about 2000 verses the Advaita (non-dual) view that the Brahman, also referred to as the Supreme Brahman, or 'That', is all that exists and exists not, that nothing else exists, the Self and the Brahman are the same, and there being nothing else, I indeed am That, I am All, and That is myself.

Awareness of this, is liberation, which results by way of knowledge and the certitude I-am-Brahman.

The opening chapters of the Ribhu Gita succinctly describe Brahman and the Self, which is enlarged upon in later chapters with examples and reiterations, repetitions and re-repetitions, to drive home the truth.

THE SELF (ATMA)

Addressing Nidaga and other sages, Ribhu begins with an explanation of the Self (Atma).

If whatever exists is to be classified as Self or non-self, there is nothing that is non-self.

This certitude that there is nothing as non-self is to be realised. There is only Brahman alone.

There being nothing other than the Self, there is nothing as the mind or body; there being no body, there is nothing as aging or decay; there being nothing as hands or feet, there is no work, or walking; there being no Creator Brahma, apart from the Self, there is no creation, no sustenance and no Hari, the Sustainer.

There is no world here, no world of gods, or the Vedas dealing with gods.

Guru does not exist, which implies there is no disciple.

Following on this, there is no dharma (righteous conduct or prescribed duties), no concept of truth (or a concept of untruth, arising with it), no fear or fearlessness (which postulates fear), no death, no birth, no birth-death cycle, no bondage and consequently no liberation.

There is nothing as interior or exterior, nothing as complete, implying something as incomplete, nothing as little or great, nothing which can be given as an example for another, neither you, nor I, neither this, nor that, no mind to think that 'The universe is Brahman alone', or 'I am the Supreme Brahman', or 'You are also only Brahman'.

Hearing this, Nidaga enquired:

'Who are you indeed? Tell me that, on hearing which one is released immediately from the hardship of samsara (birth-death-cycle) with its sorrow and suffering'.

BRAHMAN:

Ribhu explains:

I indeed am the Supreme Brahman, I indeed am the supreme happiness, all Consciousness, whose meaning cannot be given, who is without a meaning, pure, enlightened, ever blissful, eternal perfection, non-dual, indescribable, immeasurable, un-discuss-able, beyond comprehension, without beginning or end, without any resolve or purpose to achieve, not composed of any insentient matter, not woven together out of any components, devoid of activity, devoid of ego, devoid of differences, devoid of names and forms, or attachments, neither a boy, nor a youth, nor an old man, existing everywhere, the Self that is All, solely the nature of knowledge, a nature that exists by itself, the complete undivided essence, self-luminous, not the illuminator of anything else.

Nidaga enquires:

Deign to tell us the knowledge given out by Sankara, and who all qualify for Brahman-hood.

Ribhu continues:

You indeed are Brahman.

You indeed are the Supreme Guru, all manner of being, the changeless, the accomplished, the ancient, the immortal, equable, peaceful, devoid of time, the higher and the lower, the liberated, indeed liberation itself, without

afflictions, devoid of time, the witness, ever without a witness, the full and perfect.

You are in all beings, without a second, attributeless, the enlightened, serene, ever without enmity, ever without action, all pervasive, devoid of indications or qualities, devoid of all, the undivided essence, abiding only in yourself, the Truth, ever of the nature of Consciousness-Space, unfettered Bliss Supreme, of the nature of Consciousness-Bliss.

Whoever you are, you are He, of the nature of the substratum of all, devoid of all differences of meaning, devoid of disturbance, immersed in the waters of your own joy.

You alone exist in the kingdom of the Self, bow only to your own Self, do not perceive anything outside of yourself, do not swerve from your own nature, blossom within your own nature, no different from your own nature, see yourself everywhere, enjoy yourself everywhere.

UNREALITY OF THE PHENOMENAL WORLD

Ribhu continues elaborating on the unreality of the phenomenal world.

The manifest phenomenal world, a world-picture, so-called, never was created, nor does it exist.

As the phenomenal world in its entirety never exists, thought and such do not exist, nor egoity, individual soul or the jiva, no effects of delusion, no doer, no action, nothing to be done, nothing as 'one' or 'two', no mantra, no tantra, no prescribed methods of learning like sravana (listening), manana (reflection), nidhidhyasana (profound meditation), no samadhi (savikalpa or nirvikalpa), no measure, no measurement.

Indeed there is nothing as ignorance or lack of discrimination, none of the traditional concepts, no such thing as present, no earth, fire, water, air, space anywhere, no gods, no guardians of the directions, no father, no Guru at any time, nothing afar or near, no end, middle or any other state, no pairs of opposites, no reality or unreality, no communities, no caste, no refuge, nothing customary, nothing as the sextet of sama, dama and such, (for explanation of the sextet refer to Glossary in Ribhu Gita- SAT publication), no niyama (physical and mental regulations), no yama (ethical restraints) of the scheme of yoga.

ALL IS CONSCIOUSNESS:

In further explanation, the Sage sets out that all is only Consciousness, full of Consciousness. The five elements, Brahma, Hari, Siva, past and future, substance and time, the knowable and knowledge, conversation and words, true and false, beginning and end, are all only Consciousness, as also Rudra and other deities, men, beasts, gods and demons, the seer and the seen, what is fixed and what is not, all things wondrous, the body, any characteristic, cause and effect, form and formlessness, merit and demerit also are only Consciousness.

WORSHIP OF THE FORMLESS:

At this stage of the discussion, there is an interlude in the text by Suta, the narrator, about the worship of the formless, in the mind.

The worship of the One whose body is space, is done internally in the mind.

The mantras are Isavasya (dwelt in by the Lord) and other upanishadic passages, that all is pervaded by Iswara.

A seat is offered as also garments and praise, to the Isana-linga, Isvara envisaged as a linga of the Cosmos, giving ablution to the Supreme One in the thought that He cannot be wetted, and offering garments in the thought that He is clothed in Space, so devoid of garments, offering sweet smelling flowers in the thought that He is without a nose or smell or face or appearance, offering a lamp and light on a wick to the One, in the thought that He is self-illumined, offering cooked food to One who devours all, all the time, and making mental circumambulations and prostrations to One who strides over the worlds.

It is those who know not, that offer worship by an endless parade of symbolism with a mind set on rituals.

Those who know, however, worship inwardly, in abstract meditation, their minds attuned to the prescribed injunctions.

ONE UNDIVIDED ESSENCE:

Everything, though appearing discrete,is of the nature of one undivided essence (rasa), Ribhu teaches;

There is only One Undivided Essence.

Diverse, disparate instances are cited to drive home this point, with no grouping or classification or sequence of items.

Examples of such items with no classification (except that they are generally in alphabetical sequence) are given here to emphasize the point:

the atom, abode, Brahman, body, the changeless, the city, contemplation, the consumable, the dyad, dissolution, devotee, earth, eternality, existence, the exterior, the ear, father, friend, the gods, the Guru, the gross, what is to be grasped, the great, the highest, the husband, the head, the home, heaven, the individual soul, 'I', the immortal, joy, japa, knowledge, the king, light, Lordship, the Lord, mantra, mind, mother, moon, the non-existent, the nose, the name, the oblation, oneself, people , the perfectly full, religious rites, religious vows, relative, the sky, scent, scriptures, the Self also, the Supreme, the subtle, strength, the secret, Siva, sun, the trinity Brahma-Vishnu- Siva, thought, the trivial, the transcendental, the Vedas, Virat the Cosmic Person, victory, water, witness, you, whatever is separate from the one undivided essence.

There is nothing apart from the nature of the One undivided essence.

WORLD AS UNREAL AS THE HORNS OF A HARE:

There follows a chapter containing the unreality of the world to the horns of a hare.

The phenomenal world, whatever little one hears of it, the form that is seen, and the form of the seer are all declared as unreal as the horns of a hare.

In the same tenor as other portions of the teaching, numerous examples are given, as being of the nature of the horns of a hare-the pentad of elements, mind, intellect, egoity, creation, existence, destruction, the world, galaxies, merit, demerit, victory, delusion, desires, anger, greed, infatuation, pride, love, steadfastness, Guru and disciple, gross body, subtle body, cause and effect, the enjoyer, the enjoyable and enjoyment, tranquility, inquiry, happiness, waking, dream, deep sleep, the twenty four tattvas (verities), all the worlds, all dharmas with their philosophies, all learning, all ignorance, all castes and communities, holy shrines and waters, all meetings with the wise, the great, all duality, all Vedanta, all settled conclusions, all definitions of scriptural statements, whatever little is known, whatever is seen in this world, whatever one hears from the Guru, whatever one contemplates upon in one's thoughts, whatever is decided upon by the intellect, whatever is brought out

or explained by words, whatever is sensed by all the sense organs, whatever object is renounced, whatever manifests as existence, whatever is imagined in the mind, whatever is determined as the Self, whatever are considered external words, whatever is inquired into by the mind, whatever is said to be the soul, whatever the word transmigration signifies, whatever is found in the Puranas, whatever is defined in the Vedas, whatever the stand of all the Upanishads.

All is Brahman alone.

ABLUTION, MANTRA, TARPANA, HOMA:

Referring to an inquiry by Nidaga about where Ribhu has the traditional ablution (snana or bath), the mantra for this, the time for ablution, how tarpana (pouring libations of water), homa (prescribed daily sacrifices), is performed, Ribhu explains that they can all be performed directed to the Self and Brahman.

The bath in the Self is the great ablution, none other, repeating scores of times that 'All this is indeed the Supreme Brahman, I am Brahman alone'.

The mantra for ablution is similar chanting - 'Excluding me there is no water. All this indeed is the Supreme Brahman. I am Brahman alone'.

The mantra I-am-Brahman-I-am, it is assured, will destroy all sins, sorrow, diseases of the intellect, the defect of desire, the defect of conceptualizing, sankalpa, lack of discrimination, and millions of defects, mistaken notions of the body.

This will reveal knowledge of the Self, remove the idea of non-self, confer indescribable Bliss, Knowledge.

Renouncing the seven million great mantras, which can only confer hundreds of millions of births, one should resort to the japa of this one mantra: I-am- Brahman-I-am. Immediately one attains liberation.

Whoever hears this even once, the teaching eulogises, becomes Brahman himself.

The daily tarpana, the libation of water, in the manner of the prescribed daily tarpana to gods, seers and manes and others, is explained at length.

The tarpana to Brahman consists of meditation on several ideas such as, the manifold universe does not exist for ever, there is nothing as 'this', there is only Brahman ever complete.

The daily homa (sacrificial act such as those enjoined on brahmin householders, of offerings to all created beings, deceased ancestors, superior gods,

in hospitality to guests, recitation of Vedas etc.) is also likewise a meditation such as I am Brahman, I am pure, I am eternal, I am the Lord, I am of the nature of the Supreme Self. The homa reiterates the unreality of All.

The discussion is further interspersed with Brahman being All, All being unreal.

THE JIVANMUKTA:

The characteristics of a jivanmukta, one who is liberated while yet in the body, is explained at great length.

Briefly stated, one who is a jivanmukta abides solely in the Self.

He is of the firm conviction that he is the same as Brahman, he is the Self, Consciousness, attributeless, higher than the highest, beyond the triad of bodies - gross, subtle, casual, he has no body or such, has no trace of the ego, one who abides only in Consciousness, ever satisfied everywhere, abides in the Self, ever complete in the Self, is of just one nature, devoid of any thoughts of being separate.

He has nothing of mind, intelligence, ego, senses, defect, delusion, desires, anger, joy, faults, characteristics, attachments, worlds, sense organs such as ear, nose, eyes, tongue, mind, no distinguishing marks, time, space, ablution, renunciation, holy rivers, gods, shrines, birth, knowledge, position, speech, punya, papa, nothing to see.

I am Brahman, I am Consciousness, I am the highest, self-luminous, one - pointed, myself the Lord of myself, perceive myself as of the nature of myself-one who is thus is called a jivanmukta.

One who sees only himself in himself, who abides only in himself, who exists in his own Self, who sees himself in the domains of his own Self, is called a jivanmukta.

This explanation of the jivanmukta is hard to come by in all the Vedas, declares Ribhu.

VIDEHAMUKTI (LIBERATION OUTSIDE THE BODY)

One who is liberated outside the body, the Videhamukta, is one who does not remember whatever he has discarded and not discarded, one who is of the nature of Brahman, the peaceful Self, who is formless, blissful, abiding in himself, one who is the Self of all, not a single Self, or the witness of All,

one who is as the ideal Self, the beloved Self, the Self which plays, the silent Self, the natural Self, the shining Self, the originless Self, the immortal Self, the blissful Self, the dear Self, the liberated.

He who is without the concepts of truth or non-truth, ignorance or knowledge, sentience or insentience, without meditation or non-meditation, neither with a goal, or without a goal, non-existent or existent, who is someone and not anyone, a little and nothing, who has no remembrance of the body, neither the gross, nor the subtle, at the time of leaving the body, who does not think 'I indeed am Brahman, Consciousness, One', is a videhamukta.

In the words of Ribhu:

Relishing the nectarine essence of Brahman as his support, himself the nectarine essence of Brahman, and satisfied in the nectarine essence of Brahman, blissful in the great Brahman-Bliss, shining in Brahman-Bliss, the great luminary of Brahman-Bliss, blissful in the essence of the Brahman-Bliss, ever in the continuous nectar of Brahman, blissful in Brahman and always in bliss, he who is the experience of Brahman-Bliss, the Bliss of the worship of Siva, the Brahman-nectar, who relishes the essence of Brahman-Bliss, is elated in Brahman- Bliss, belonging to the 'family of Brahman nectar', surrounded by people in Brahman-Bliss, residing in the delectable Brahman nectar, remaining in the temple of Brahman-Bliss, reciting constantly the mantra of Brahman-Bliss, the end of whose body is Brahman-Bliss, whose senses are Brahman-Bliss, whose Knowledge is that of the nectar of Brahman, intoxicated in the Bliss of Brahman, brimming with the nectarine essence of Brahman, ever established in Brahman-Self is the videhamukta.

SELF, BRAHMAN, IS ALL:

Ribhu reverts time and again to the topics of there being All, and Brahman being All.

There is an exhortation thus:

Look at the Self alone, consider yourself to be the Self, be in your Self, experience the Self yourself, being happy only in one's own Self.

Considering oneself as the Self, one should perceive oneself as the Self, understanding oneself as the Self, oneself satisfied in one's own Self, oneself filled up by one's own Self, enjoying oneself one's own Self, oneself full of love for one's Self, one should reflect only on one's own Self, only the Self is to be

heard, the Self alone is to be desired, the Self alone attended to always.

Brahman, likewise, is All the things that are, when they are looked upon as Brahman.

ALL DIFFERENCES UNREAL:

All differences are unreal-differences such as 'this' and 'you', forms here and there, interactions, differences of philosophy, differences of desire, and of the world, differences of duality, of the phenomenal, of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep, and the fourth state, of doer and action, of qualities of the nature of taste and such, of characteristics between the existent and the non-existent, within the existent and non-existent, of is and is not, of misapprehension of differences, as sankalpa and vikalpa, all differences ever due to knowledge or ignorance, and non-difference, are simply unreal.

Also are unreal, the pentad of sensory organs, the pentad of organs of action, the pentad of sense data, pentad of elements, pentad of deities, pentad of sheaths, sextet of sheaths, sextet of modifications, sextet of anxieties, sextet of enemies, sextet of times, sextet of seasons, the twelve months, the year (these various terms are explained at length in the glossary to the Ribhu Gita text published by SAT, Santa Cruz, California).

There is repetition of everything being Consciousness.

SUMMARY OF SETTLED CONCLUSIONS:

The topic of the summary of settled conclusions, in brief, states:

I am alone the Supreme Brahman, the highest of the high, the peaceful Self, one that reaches everywhere, the eternal, the attributeless, the cause, all the world, the liberator, Consciousness, the innermost of all, the Self of all that is composed of the five elements and their quintuplication, you and I, the imperishable, the immutable, the illuminator, the creator, the protector, the certainty, the witness, of the nature of the non-dual, the bodiless, my own support, the great space, possessed of parts, ever the front and the posterior, without attitudes, the limit of attitudes, the resplendent, the auspicious, the pauseless continuity, the pure, the attributeless, bodiless, desireless, delusionless, the knowledge that is easily obtainable, the knowledge that is rare even for the wise, the Supreme Light, the Supreme abode; I indeed am you indeed; I am not even 'I'.

RENUNCIATION:

The teaching urges total renunciation saying:

Renouncing all forms, be of the certitude that All is Brahman, that is the truth.

Renounce the remembrance of prakrti (manifestation), and resort to the remembrance of Brahman.

Then, renouncing even that, be firm in your own nature.

Renouncing further the established nature, remain only as the Self.

Renouncing the renunciation even, ever leave off the idea of any differences.

Surrounding yourself yourself, abide in yourself yourself.

UNREALITY OF DUALITY:

The topic of negation of names and forms; also urges that All is Brahman, there is nothing else, I, indeed am the Supreme Brahman. Having heard all the duality, explained to be imaginary, all this duality brought in for purposes of explanation, should be forgotten in a second, and abandoned like a scrap of wood or rusted iron.

An example is given. When the mother is dead, people should be called in for crying (over the loss), distributing dravya (goods or money). The pentad of dravyas (substances: the elements earth, water, fire, air, space) is like their crying (unreal).

SECRET INITIATION:

There follow instructions, said to be the secret from Sankara, which, in brief, reiterate:

Brahman is All, giving such variety of examples as before, such as Brahman is the Vedas, the Truth, the trinity of gods, the fleeting moment, the letters of the alphabet like 'a', 'u', 'm', 'si', 'va', the exhaled, inhaled and retained breath. Brahman alone is, nothing else is.

Some ignoramuses talk only about duality; they are not fit to be spoken to, not to be honoured, not fit to be bowed to, unworthy of attention.

Even Brahman is also nothing else, except Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, transcending time, intellect, mind, transcending all. It is the Transcendent.

FIRM CERTITUDE THE HALLMARK OF THE TEACHING:

Being the perfectly full Self of firm certitude, filled with all the Reality of firm certitude, being the peaceful Self of firm certitude, the jivatma of firm certitude, be as you please in all states and times.

Firm certitude here is alone the hallmark of the Knowledge of the teaching, the cause of attaining the treasure of liberation.

Acting in this manner alone enables the firmness that I am indeed Brahman, Be of the conviction that nothing else exists.

Then, renouncing even that conviction, be just as the One; renouncing even that, ever remain without any attributes; renouncing this too, one should transcend all words;

renouncing this again, focus on just being Consciousness; renouncing even the transcendence of the Self, focus only on Brahman; renounce being only Consciousness alone also, focus on just all-silence, renouncing which also, focus on ineffable quiescence;

renouncing this further, take refuge in the quiescence of the mind; renouncing that also, take to the quiescence of the jiva; renouncing this, focus on the void of the jiva;

renouncing attainment of the void, exist as you are; renouncing also that existence, which is beyond the range of the words and mind, do not speak of anything afterwards or perceive anything afterwards;

Or else, with total renunciation of everything, focus on 'I am Brahman'; always thinking of this, be ever of the certitude of being without any qualities. Renouncing attachment to the body, renounce the very substance of thought. Always be of the conviction that I am the Self, I am myself.

Remaining thus, you will become liberated, with no activity or enquiry.

All is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss- the individual soul, non-duality, the meaning of the scriptures, the scriptural texts, the homa, the ruler of oneself, the object of enjoyment, the generative cause, all the parts, Sankara, the Creator of the World, the sportive Self, the settled conclusions.

What has been said here should never be discussed by a person of discrimination with those whose minds are given to the pleasure of the world, or the totally foolish whom one may meet as a fellow traveller en route, or read aloud among the ignorant.

If a woman desires to learn this, it should be from the mouth of a brahmin. All being Consciousness, the difference of being a woman also disap-

pears.

Even if endowed with a study of the Vedas, if there is absence of real knowledge the 'twice-born' (brahmin invested with the sacred thread) is really not 'twice-born'. Only the aspirants after liberation are endowed with the sacred thread of Brahman.

This entire secret has been told by Bhagavan Sankara Himself indeed.

ABIDING AS THAT ITSELF:

There is instruction on the exercise of abiding as That itself:

Ever abide as That itself - That which is the Supreme Brahman, the Self of All,

That in which -

there is no fear of duality, non-duality awakens, peacefulness and non peacefulness both do not exist.

there is nothing of sankalpa, there is no misapprehension, nô thinking, no bhava exists, no world, no existence of existence or non-existence, no fear of the pairs of opposites,

speech and body have ended in dissolution, the manifest universe is yet unborn, no manifestation of delusion or illusion, no wise man or wisdom, nothing of own side or opposing side,

no differentiation such as being Vishnu, Brahma or Sankara, no truth and non- truth, no idea as jiva, no macrocosm or microcosm, no conception of body, no intellect or empirical knowledge, no conception of desire or time,

no jivanmukti, no enquiry into the Self, no classifications or differences, neither the terror of hell, nor the treasures of heaven, no experience or suffering, no fear of sins, no sins, no attachments, no triad of afflictions, no knowledge has yet arisen.

Abide as That, by knowing which all is renounced and nothing else remains, nothing else is to be known, in which I am not, in which you are not, in which you yourself are not indeed yourself, in which there is no difference between oneself and one's Self, in which 'I' is surely dead, immersed wherein one does not see, nothing shines, wherein, indeed, there is only Bliss, the Supreme Bliss.

MAHA VAKYAS (GREAT APHORISMS)

The Mahavakyas or great Aphorisms, occurring in the Vedas, tersely

expressing fundamental Truth, are explained thus -

Prajnanam Brahma: Absolute Knowledge is Brahman.

All that is seen is of the nature of knowledge without interspace, all the world is indeed only knowledge.

The jiva is associated with Absolute Knowledge. Isvara is associated with Brahman. The undivided meaning of this, pervaded by the undivided essence, is their identity.

Being in the undivided mode, while apparently in a form, is called jivanmukti. The Reality that is one undivided essence is called jivanmukti.

Leaving aside the words 'Absolute Knowledge', and indeed the word 'Brahman' leaving aside 'I', all remembrance and bhavas created by thought, being in a state of complete voidness, leaving aside even the state of silence, any vikalpa about silence, the egoity that I am the body (which is the state of duality), and abiding in the firm conclusion that I am the witness of All, being ever doubtless about Brahman, is called the witness state.

The state of duality, the witness state and the nature of the undivided state, the one undivided essence - there are thus three such states in the world.

The first is a belief in the duality, the second is the doubt of being the witness; in the third alone, certainty is said to exist.

Having enquired into and tested the meaning of all three, and putting them aside, attain certitude. Reaching the nature of the one undivided essence, ever stay in that path, being only That itself.

This sentence is for practice always, and is the basis of practice.

Aham Brahma Asmi: I am Brahman.

This sentence is the supreme sentence for reflection. It should be reasoned out. The meaning of the word 'aham' ('I') is the jiva, Isvara is the meaning for the world 'Brahman', 'asmi' (am) is the state of being the undivided nature.

As this is a statement to be experienced, one should always experience it. 'I am Brahman, eternal, peaceful, attributeless, desireless, partless, the Supreme, I am the Self, the one undivided essence, thus, in this knowledge one should uninterruptedly consider oneself as the Supreme Self.

The third sentence reads on the face of it -

'Tat tvam asi' - That you are.

The meaning of the word 'That' is Isvara. For the word 'you', the meaning is 'jiva', the meaning for the word of identity 'are' is the one undivided essence.

Of the dual mode, the witness mode and the mode of undivided existence, the undivided one is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, and it is certain That you are.

You are Brahman, changeless Consciousness, undivided certainty.

Be assured that whoever tells you you are Brahman, is indeed the Guru. Likewise you are that Brahman. Indeed you are the sadguru too. Whoever gets conviction in the words of the Guru, attaining the certitude of Truth, always makes for liberation. There is no need to debate on this.

It is declared that 'That you are', is the great aphorism of upadesa (instruction).

What arises from the statement:

Ayam Atma Brahma: This Self is Brahman, is said to be a statement of perception.

The meaning of the word 'This', is the jiva and that of Atma (the Self) is the Supreme Isvara. Likewise the meaning of 'Brahma' is being in the undivided mode. The meaning, together, of the three words, is the one of undivided essence.

The words are: one is 'This', one is 'the Self', one is 'Brahman'. The meaning of this is the undivided Self. 'The Self' denotes Isvara. The meaning of 'I am' is the undivided essence.

The dual mode, the undivided mode, then the undivided essence - then be of the conviction He is I.

The statements are loaded with conditionings. The denoted meaning is the simple unconditioned state.

The individual Self, being the lower, conditioned by littleness of knowledge and such characteristics, Isvara by sentience, omniscience and such, I being the witness, should all be renounced as void, with the certitude that I am Brahman.

There is no doubt of this. I am of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

ILLUSORINESS OF VARIOUS WORLDS:

Ribhu reverts again to the illusoriness of All.

clarifying that thought, mind and the state of Brahman being different,

the concept of differences in liberation, determination of purity and impurity, misconceptions as punya and papa.

the concept that it is the mind that thinks, serenity and control of senses which are states of the mind that is not existent.

the concept of the worlds of Brahmaloka, Vishnuloka, the world of Rudraloka of the nature of egoity, the world of Chandra (moon) of the nature of the illusory mind,

the world of Akasa (space) associated with ear and sound,

the world of Surya (sun) associated with eyes and form,

the world of Varuna (water) associated with tongue and taste,

the world of Vayu (wind) associated with skin and touch,

the world of Asvins (the divine doctors) associated with the duality of smell,

the world of Agni (fire) associated with speech and words,

the world of Indra (chief of gods) associated with hands and legs,

the great world of Upendra (Vamana incarnation) associated with feet and movement,

the world of Mrtyu (god of death) associated with the organ of excretion,

Maharloka the world of Prajapati (the progenitor) associated with secrets and enjoyment,

are all illusory.

If the removal of all conceptual knowledge comes about, there is attainment of joy.

The difference between cause and action, the worship of deities apart from the Self, the worship of Siva apart from the Self, are illusory.

Likewise there is again extensive description that Brahman is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss indeed.

NON-EXISTENCE OF THE WORLD:

The discourse then launches on a string of examples to illustrate the non-existence of the world thus -

All is unreal; Isvara the creator and the world are concepts like the son of a barren woman.

The world is like the top of a peak in the illusory city of Gandharvas (celestial beings) in the sky (like castles in the air).

The world would be, if one could get great satisfaction from drinking of the waters of a mirage,

if a man could be killed by the peak of a mountain looking like an arrow,

if the sky is an ocean of blue,

if the silver appearing on an oyster shell could make a real ornament,

if a man could enter into the transmigratory cycle by being killed by a snake which is an illusory superimposition on a rope,

if burning flames of fire could be quenched by an arrow of flowers,

if cooking could be done with a log which is the stem of a green plantain tree,

if instant satisfaction could be had from a bevy of virgins,

if there were a crow-swan in an illusory forest,

if the basic mantra(bijakshara) could constitute a pleasing conversation,

if a man who died a month ago were to return,

if buttermilk could attain the nature of milk,

if milk coming out of the udder of a cow were to flow back into the teats,

if an elephant gone mad could be tied by the hair of a tortoise,

if the Meru mountain were to be dragged by lotus tendrils,

if a river flowing into the ocean were to be damned by a garland of waves,

if a lotus were to grow in a flaming conflagration,

if Indra's mansion were to materialize atop a huge mountain,

if a fish were to come and stay on a lotus seed,

if the sun were splintered and swallowed up,

if the Mountain Meru had a tail,

if a lion is killed and consumed by a mosquito,

if all the three worlds were contained in the hollow of an atom,

if an object in the dream state were to constitute into the waking state,

if a flowing river stood still,

if one confirmed blind becomes an expert in the appraisal of gems,

if the shadow planet 'Rahu' (the shadow cast on earth by the sun and the moon) were to be seen without the sun and the moon,

if there is growth from a decayed seed,

if anything born of the mind were to grow,

if the indigent were to experience the pleasures of the affluent,

if the milk that had been milked out were to flow back again (into the teats),

if there is only a mirror and no reflection,

if the sky were to disappear and only its reflection remain,

if there is an elephant in the womb of a gnat,

There are further topics on Brahman-conviction in a similar vein as before in a variety of phraseology.

The topic of the dissolution of all concludes that, by conviction in Brahman, thought, sorrow, duality, desire, anger, covetousness, the knot of the heart, arrogance, worship, contemplation, holy ablutions, mantra, sin, merit, defects, misapprehensions, attachments, knowledge, existence, fear, the Vedas, scriptures, sleep, action, the fourth state, all come to an end.

EULOGY OF THE TREATISE:

There follows a eulogy about the history and merits of this treatise.

All of this has been expounded by Siva himself.

This knowledge has been brought from the presence of Sankara in Kailasa.

Dakshinamurti taught this to the gods for ten thousand years. Vighneswara taught this for several thousand years. Siva himself taught this to Parvati for a year. Vishnu, in the ocean of milk, taught this to Brahma.

Once upon a time in Brahmaloka I (Ribhu, the mind-born son of Brahma) taught this to my father (Brahma). Narada and other sages were also extensively taught.

Obtaining this comprehensively within a short time, I have come here.

Millions of sacred streams will not confer, even a gift of land, will not confer what a single quatrain of this text can.

Renouncing all, ever, all mantras also, all deities, all holy baths, all bhavas all homas, all charities, all worship, all secrecy, all service, the guide , the Guru, the entire world, all wealth, all resolutions, all other practice, this text should be practised.

If one hears this even once in the midst of life, he too is liberated.

The settled conclusions of all scriptures, the epitome of all Vedas, the quintessence of all essences, the great essence of all essences, there is nothing to equal this text, in all the three worlds.

It is rare to come by, not being renowned in the world or in the heavens, in Brahmaloka or in all the scriptures.

Brahma secreted this text and cast it away in the ocean of milk, thinking that none should be liberated by this. Knowing this, and reaching the shores of the ocean of milk, I took hold of this, and seeing what I had caught hold of, my father swore at me. Then I left that world, and have come here.

There are none who know or expound this. Hearers of this text are also rare. There is no competent Guru for this; nor are there many who possess

this text, hence this has not attained prominence.

To you it has been revealed. I shall now return to the place wherefrom I came.

NIDAGHA'S EXPERIENCE:

Nidagha extols in joy -

O Brahman! having achieved what I sought, I am satisfied; by the darshan of yourself my life has become fulfilled.

I bow to your feet with courtesy, not in Reality. There is no occasion for this. I indeed am not real, you indeed do not exist, nor is there anything of mine, there is not even the word 'Brahman'.

When asked by Ribhu whether he absorbed the knowledge of Brahman, Nidagha continues -

My ignorance, fear, constant belief in action, the concept of the phenomenal world being real, have now reached the conviction of Reality.

All the universe has fallen off. Thought has entirely faded away. I am indeed the expanse of Consciousness, the perfectly full Self.

Even the conviction that I am myself has disappeared.

There is nothing of brahminhood. The ideas of caste, the activities prescribed for each order of life, are entirely the chimera of thought.

I am Brahma, I am Janardhana, I am all peace, all pervasive, unfettered; I have crossed over, I am liberated.

By your grace, I am Brahman, you yourself do not exist, all this is not, there is nothing at all, no distress, no differences, no fear, no illness, no decay for me.

The gross body I see not, nor the subtle, nor the casual, nor the mind, nor the expanse of Consciousness, nor the world, Hari, Siva, no differences at any time, no joy or sorrow, nor the Guru, nor the high or low, no qualities, no fourth state, no intellect, no doubt, no time, no body and organs, no elements, no one-pointed concentration, nor anything else.

Submerged in the sea of bliss, I am endless, unborn, immortal, eternal, perfectly full. I am the goal of all. True guru! I have told you all about the nature of my experience.

I do not prostrate to you. All is the offering to the Guru. The body, offered at your feet, is instantly razed to ashes by you. You are I, and I am you, I indeed am you yourself. I am submerged in the ocean of identity. You are indeed the knowledge of that identity.

No movement is possible for you. There is indeed no place to go for you or me. There is only One and no second. There is nothing for you to say, and nothing for me to hear.

You indeed are not the revered Guru, I am not the disciple. If I make obeisance to myself, it it fruitless. If there is obeisance to you, no fruit will ensue because of differentiation. If I made obeisance to you, you will say, I am an ignoramus.

If I do it myself, I become delimited. There is no prostration to anybody at any time.

In this holy Sivarahasya, which has emanated from Siva, narrated to Devi by Siva, and by Devi to Skanda, the knowledge of the Supreme Isvara is heard, the sun that dispels the stygian darkness of the great Maya.

By narrating only one chapter hereof, supreme knowledge is tasted.

Whoever expounds this treatise is indeed the Guru, the Supreme Brahman, Siva himself, verily Devi herself, Ganesa himself, Skanda, Nandikesvara, Dakshinamurti.

Practicing in particular that which is contained in this treatise, according to the words of the Guru, the disciple should do no disservice to the Guru, either by mind or by body.

The Guru is indeed Siva in person. If Siva is angered, the Guru will protect you, if the Guru is angered, no one else can protect you.

Whoever is without the grace of Siva will never know the meaning of this text. Such knowledge of Siva, the ocean of the essence of the Vedas, is not to be found in any other purana (legendary lore) or itihasa (epic). This has also been told by Siva himself without samkhya or yoga (systems of Hindu philosophy).

Easy to acquire by bhava alone, to be reached by devotion, afflictionless, conferring great bliss, it is only to be obtained by direct Grace.

(At the end of each chapter of the text, there is a stanza or two in eulogy of Siva, not explicitly determinable as part of the discourse of Ribhu - perhaps the words of the narrator).

If, after hearing this treatise from the Guru, proper worship is not performed or Isvara is not worshipped in the heart, one could be subject to untold misery in future births.

The knower of this treatise becomes Brahman himself. What is the need of incessant repetition? The knowledge confers liberation.

Nidagha further says:

One should, as long as one is in the body, serve the guru with wealth and worship him, being of the certitude 'I am Brahman'.

As long as one is in the body, one should wear ashes always, with the uttering of the mantra beginning 'Agni' and such, and the three stripes uttering the mantra beginning 'Tria-ayusam' and 'Tryambaka'.

Constant besmearing with ashes is only for those who wear the triple stripes of ashes. This is the sirovrta (the chief observance), the simple wearing of ashes. By wearing the ashes a year long, I have reached your feet and have attained my emancipation.

Among those liberated while yet in the body, for the jivanmukta, the shackles of prarabdha (acquired merits and demerits that have already begun to fructify) persist. Experiencing whatever is received through prarabdha, one should remain happy.

I am only Consciousness indeed, of the nature of Existence-Consciousness- Bliss; eschewing all differences always, the difference as Brahman also should be renounced.

Ribhu concludes -

I say this unto you. May you be strengthened by this. Always have this conviction until the grace of Siva is yours.

I indeed am the Supreme Brahman, Sadasiva, Consciousness alone, the attributeless the partless, the void, the Self of all, the witness of the world, the liberated Self, ever be of such conviction yourself.

If you have wealth, never withhold from the Supreme Guru the offering to be made to him; if you do, you will be consigned for eons to horrible hell.

Nidagha stood up and gave up his wife and children, and also gave up his body like a son, with all affection, and also wealth and grain and garments, and stood beside the Guru.

Pleased by the offerings, Ribhu said -

You have now acquired Knowledge of Brahman. You are a blessed soul, indeed. There is no doubt of this.

Be ever of the certitude that this is the nature of Brahman.

Be of the certitude that there is no liberation other than having this certitude, none other. Certitude is the cause of Liberation. There is no other cause indeed.

The essence of all the worlds, the essence of all Vedanta, the essence of the equanimous Guru, the essence of the meaning of all the Vedas, the essence of all the worlds, the essence of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, the

essence of the victory of equanimity - this is ever the essence of Liberation, the Liberation from all births, the Liberation that is ever the fourth state, the easiest Liberation of all, the Liberation from all domains. This is complete Liberation attained by just listening and reflection.

Ribhu, thus conveying this description of the Knowledge of Siva, addressed Nidagha, in the midst of the assembled sages.

They too, pleased on hearing this essence of the words of the Vedas, prostrated and spoke thus in great joy.

Sages:

You are the father, the mother, the Guru, the friend, and the well-wisher.

You lead us across the ocean of ignorance to the shore.

You are our refuge.

Leading us by your power, you make us happy by the words of Siva, which mean, "By the strength of my words alone is there easy access to the attainment of the Supreme Path."

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu

–oOo–

There is no coming into being,
No extinction; no one bound
And no one making effort;
No one for perfection, yearning, no one
Attaining freedom.
This is the truth Supreme.

Garland of Guru's Sayings Ver. 1227

All the letters in this book add upto a single, imperishable letter. This as written you have read. The single letter shines for ever of its own accord within the Heart. Who can hope to write it?

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

Om Shanti! Shanti! Shantih!

ERRATA

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read as*
8	21	Laurette	Laureate
19	5	thravinam	dravinam
33	30	consubstaniality	consubstantiality
36	21	antic	ontic
37	8	ironic	irenic
50	28	யகண்ட	வகண்ட
59	31	Silent,	Silent, it
85	18	some what	somewhat
91	3	mean	means
93	11	work	works
119	last line	become	(delete this)
120	3	priorities	priorities,
121	18	unresponsible	unresponsive
124	—	The only	The only colour
133	last line	Dr. Mess	Dr. Mees
145	last line	font	fount
146	34	paise	paisa
148	13	advise	advice
149	10	one thirty	one-thirty
150	13	reaches	reached
	34	pally acting	play-acting
154	Box-3	diplays	displays
176	27	"crisis"	"crises"
207	5	*talks*	*Talks*
230	last line	(*Vivekachudamani*) *Bhagavan Sri Ramana*	(*from Vivekachudamani*) *Bhagavan's Translation*